00036722

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 17 February, 2016

MEMOIRS

OF THE

LIFE

OF THE RIGHT HONORABLE

WILLIAM PITT.

36722. oc

BY GEORGE TOMLINE, D.D. F.R.S.

LORD BISHOP OF WINCHESTER,

PRELATE OF THE MOST NOBLE ORDER OF THE GARTER.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE-STREET.

M.DCCC.XXI.

FJD

923.2112

PIT/TAN/MEN

36722

00036722

TO

THE EARL OF CHATHAM,

KNIGHT OF THE MOST NOBLE ORDER OF THE GARTER,

ONE OF HIS MAJESTY'S MOST HONORABLE PRIVY COUNCIL,

&c. &c. &c.

THESE MEMOIRS OF HIS ILLUSTRIOUS BROTHER,

DURING WHOSE ADMINISTRATION

HE SUCCESSIVELY HELD

THE HIGH AND IMPORTANT OFFICES

OF

FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY,

LORD PRIVY SEAL,

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL,

AND MASTER GENERAL OF THE ORDNANCE,

ARE RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

AS A TESTIMONY OF SINCERE AND WARM REGARD

AND IN GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT

OF THE LONG AND UNINTERRUPTED FRIENDSHIP

WITH WHICH HE HAS HONORED

THE AUTHOR.

CONTENTS

OF THE

FIRST VOLUME.

CHAPTER THE FIRST:

Birth and early attainments of Mr. Pitt — He is called to the Bar — Chosen Member for Appleby — Distinguishes himself by his Speeches in Parliament — Appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer - - - - - - - - - - page 1.

CHAPTER THE SECOND:

Prorogation of Parliament — Negotiations for Peace — Meeting of Parliament — Preliminary Articles of Peace — Debates upon them in the House of Commons — Mr. Pitt resigns — Coalition Administration - - - - - - - - - page 66.

CHAPTER THE THIRD:

End of Session of Parliament — Mr. Pitt visits France — Parliament meets — Mr. Fox's India Bill — Mr. Pitt appointed First Lord of the Treasury page 120.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH:

Situation of the Country — Conduct of Opposition — Mr. Pitt's India Bill rejected — Parliament dissolved — Reflections - - - - - - - - - - - - page 176.

CHAPTER THE FIFTH:

Mr. Pitt elected Member for the University of Cambridge — Westminster Election — Meeting of Parliament — Mr. Pitt's Finance Measures — His India Bill — End of Session - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - page 374.

CHAPTER THE SIXTH:

Continental Affairs — Meeting of Parliament — Westminster Scrutiny — Finance Measures — Parliamentary Reform — Commercial Intercourse between Great Britain and Ireland — Prorogation of Parliament - - - - - page 421.

CHAPTER THE SEVENTH:

Continental Affairs — Meeting of Parliament — The Duke of Richmond's Plan of Fortifications — Mr. Pitt's Plan for the Redemption of the National Debt — His other Finance Measures — Amendment of Mr. Pitt's India Bill — Commencement of Proceedings against Mr. Hastings — Prorogation of Parliament - page 496.

PREFACE.

THE motives which originally induced me to undertake the following work, and the consciousness of my inability to do justice to the subject, render it impossible for me to publish these Memoirs, without experiencing much more than the ordinary anxiety of an author. Having had the honor and happiness of superintending Mr. Pitt's education at the university; having for some time acted as his confidential secretary, and afterwards kept up a constant communication with him, upon all matters connected with his official situation; having received from him the most decisive proofs of kindness and good opinion; having lived with him in the most unreserved and uninterrupted intimacy from the beginning of our acquaintance to the hour of his death; and having access to all his papers as one of his

executors, I was emboldened, by the consideration of these advantages, and urged by the combined feelings of affection, gratitude, and duty, to endeavor to convey some idea of the character of one, in whom the talents of a great statesman, and the virtues and qualities of an amiable man, were so eminently united.

The volumes now offered to the public, reach to the declaration of war by France against Great Britain in 1793, a remarkable epoch both in Mr. Pitt's political life, and in the history of this country. It is my intention, if it shall please God to indulge me with a continuance of life and health, to proceed in the work, with all the expedition consistent with the discharge of more important duties. The remaining portion will, I hope, be comprised in one volume, for which I reserve what relates to Mr. Pitt's private life; and arduous as has been the task of describing his ministerial conduct, I foresee far greater difficulty in giving a just notion of his manners, temper, and dispostion, which I have always considered as constituting the most extraordinary part of his character.

The form of our constitution causing every measure of government to be discussed in parliament, which is indeed the grand theatre of political contest in this kingdom, it has been necessary to relate the proceedings in the house of commons. I am aware, not only that the printed debates, to which I have been compelled to have frequent recourse, are in all cases more or less inaccurate; but also that the uninterrupted flow of Mr. Pitt's eloquence, without hesitation or repetition, rendered it peculiarly difficult, as was universally acknowledged, to report his speeches with tolerable correctness. I trust, however, that I have, in no instance, mis-stated his opinion, or departed from his general line of argument: and I am persuaded, that his speeches here inserted, imperfect as they are, will be considered as highly interesting. Although they will by no means enable the reader to form an adequate judgment of that matchless eloquence, which called forth unbounded applause from all who heard it, he will have the satisfaction and advantage of knowing Mr. Pitt's sentiments upon all the important subjects which he had occasion to discuss; accompanied with the most authentic explanation, which can be procured

from existing documents, of those pure and constitutional principles, upon which he invariably acted.

I cannot but flatter myself, that the summary account I have given of what passed in France and in England, at the commencement of the French revolution, may be useful at the present moment. The opposite effects of supineness and of energy in the well-intentioned parts of the communities, and of weak and of vigorous counsels in the respective governments, of the two countries—of wild theories and of practical principles—of atheistic philosophy and of pure religion—will indeed furnish an instructive lesson, both to private individuals and to persons placed in situations of power and trust, to the end of time; and, it is to be hoped, will never be disregarded in this nation.

It was indispensable to the main object I had in view, to enter into a full statement of the principles publicly maintained, and of the conduct pursued, by the opponents of Mr. Pitt, which has unavoidably led me to speak of persons still living, or who have left others closely connected

with them by birth or in politics; but it has been my earnest endeavor to represent every opinion and fact fairly and impartially, and not to give offence by any harsh or uncandid observation. I have felt it also incumbent upon me, in writing the history of so recent a period, to suppress many circumstances and anecdotes of a more private nature, supplied by papers in my possession, and other authentic sources, relating to his friends as well as to his enemies, although they would have thrown additional lustre on the character of Mr. Pitt.

ERRATA.

VOL. I.

page 97, line 20. - - - *dele* comma *after* probamque
129 — 15. - - - *for* stationary *read* stationery
187 — 3. - - - *put* quotation marks *before* that
208 — 7. - - - *for* describe *read* ascribe
210 — 11. - - - *for* reigns *read* reins
316 — 1. - - - *insert* he *before* declared
347 contents. - - - *after* elected *add* member
394 — 3 from bottom, *for* occurrencies *read* occurrences
410 — 8 from bottom, *for* in *read* on
433 — 15. - - - *dele* quotation marks
478 — 3. - - - *for* effected *read* affected
— — 3 from bottom, *dele* of
518 — 1. - - - *for* counsels *read* councils
574 — 10 from bottom, *for* particulary *read* particularly

VOL. II.

page 21, line 6. - - - *insert* him *after* return
117 — 3. - - - *for* reigns *read* reins
127 — 11 from bottom, *for* has *read* have
141 — 6. - - - *for* could *read* would
193 — 11 from bottom, *dele the* comma *after* conduct
235 — 15. - - - *for* pu *read* put
240 — 9 from bottom, *for* he *read* the
245 — 7. - - - *for* affected *read* effected
508 — 16. - - - *for* deliberatative *read* deliberative
526 — 21. - - - *for* empires *read* empire
589 — 10. - - - *for* materially *read* naturally
604 — 6 from bottom, *for* exise *read* excise

MEMOIRS

OF THE

LIFE

OF THE

RIGHT HONORABLE WILLIAM PITT.

CHAPTER THE FIRST:

1759.

Birth, and early attainments of Mr. Pitt — He is called to the Bar — Chosen Member for Appleby — Distinguishes himself by his Speeches in Parliament — Appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer.

CHAP. I. 1759.

WILLIAM PITT, second son of William first EARL of CHATHAM, and of lady Hester only daughter of Richard Grenville, esq. and countess Temple, was born at Hayes in Kent on the 28th of May 1759. Of his Father it is unnecessary for me to speak; and of his Mother I shall only observe, that she was highly distinguished by strength of understanding, superior attainments, and most accomplished manners. Lord and lady Chatham had two other sons, the present earl of Chatham, and Mr. James Pitt; and also two daughters, the elder of whom, lady Hester, was married in 1774 to lord viscount Mahon, and the younger, lady Harriot, in 1785 to the honorable Edward James Eliot, eldest son of lord Eliot.

CHAP. I.

Mr. Pitt, when about six years old, was placed under the tuition of the rev. Edward Wilson, afterwards prebendary of Gloucester and canon of Windsor, who attended him at lord Chatham's house; and this mode of education was continued eight years, during half at least of which period, his health was so indifferent, as to render him unable to apply to any serious study. But notwithstanding this loss of time, the progress he made in learning was such, that in the year 1773, his father, designing the law to be his profession, determined to send him, for the completion of his education, to Pembroke-hall, Cambridge. He was admitted in the spring of that year, and went to reside in the beginning of the following October. On account of the private manner in which he had been hitherto educated, his tender age, and the extreme delicacy of his constitution, it was thought right, that Mr. Wilson should live with him for a few weeks in the same college apartment, without however having any concern in the direction of his studies. Lord Chatham wrote a letter to the master of the college, in which he expressed a desire, that each of the two public tutors, who were then Mr. Turner* and myself, would devote an hour in every day to his son. This plan was accordingly adopted; but after Mr Pitt's first three visits to Cambridge, he was entirely under my care and tuition.

Although Mr. Pitt was little more than fourteen years of age, when he went to reside at the university, and had laboured under the disadvantage of frequent ill health, the knowledge, which he then possessed, was very considerable; and in particular, his proficiency in the learned languages was probably

* Now master of Pembroke-hall, and dean of Norwich.

greater than ever was acquired by any other person in such early youth. In Latin authors he seldom met with difficulty; and it was no uncommon thing for him to read into English six or seven pages of Thucydides *, which he had not previously seen, without more than two or three mistakes, and sometimes without even one. He had such an exactness in discriminating the sense of words, and so peculiar a penetration in seizing at once, the meaning of a writer, that, as was justly observed by Mr. Wilson, he never seemed to learn, but only to recollect. Whenever he did err in rendering a sentence, it was owing to the want of a correct knowledge of grammar, without which no language can be perfectly understood. This defect, too common in a private education, it was my immediate endeavour to supply; and he was not only soon master of all the ordinary rules of grammar, but taking great pleasure in the philological disquisitions of critics and commentators, he became deeply versed in the niceties of construction and peculiarities of idiom, both in the Latin and Greek languages. He had also read the first six books of Euclid's Elements, Plane Trigonometry, the elementary parts of Algebra, and the two quarto volumes of Rutherforth's Natural Philosophy, a work in some degree of repute while Mr. Wilson was a student at Cambridge, but afterwards laid aside.

Nor was it in learning only, that Mr. Pitt was so much superior to persons of his age. Though a boy in years and

* It was by lord Chatham's particular desire, that Thucydides was the first Greek book which Mr. Pitt read after he came to college. The only other wish ever expressed by his lordship, relative to Mr. Pitt's studies, was, that I would read Polybius with him.

CHAP. I.

appearance, his manners were formed, and his behaviour manly. He mixed in conversation with unaffected vivacity; and delivered his sentiments with perfect ease, equally free from shyness and flippancy, and always with strict attention to propriety and decorum. Lord Chatham, who could not but be aware of the powers of his son's mind and understanding, had encouraged him to talk without reserve upon every subject, which frequently afforded opportunity for conveying useful information and just notions of persons and things. When his lordship's health would permit, he never suffered a day to pass without giving instruction of some sort to his children; and seldom without reading a chapter of the Bible with them*. He must indeed be considered as having contributed largely to that fund of knowledge, and to those other advantages, with which Mr. Pitt entered upon his academical life.

The effects of a very serious illness, with which Mr. Pitt was attacked soon after he went to the university in 1773, occasioned him to reside but little at Cambridge in the first three years. This illness, which confined him nearly two months, and at last reduced him to so weak a state, that, after he was convalescent, he was four days in travelling to London, seems to have been

* I had frequent opportunities of observing Mr. Pitt's accurate knowledge of the Bible; and I may, I trust, be allowed to mention the following anecdote: In the year 1797, I was reading with him, in manuscript, my Exposition of the First of the Thirty-nine Articles, which I afterwards published in the Elements of Christian Theology. There were several quotations from Scripture, all of which he remembered, and made no observation upon them. At last, we came to a quotation, at which he stopped, and said, "I do not recollect that passage in the Bible, and it does not sound like Scripture." It was a quotation from the Apocrypha, which he had not read.

a crisis in his constitution. By great attention to diet, to exercise, and to early hours, he gradually gained strength, without any relapse, or material check; and his health became progressively confirmed. At the age of eighteen he was a healthy man; and he continued so for many years. The preservation of Mr. Pitt's life, in its early part, may be considered as owing, under Providence, to his own care and the affectionate watchfulness of his friends; and the premature decline of his health, long before he reached the ordinary age of man, may as justly be ascribed to the anxiety and fatigue of unremitted attention to the duties of his public station.

It was originally intended, that Mr. Pitt should take the degree of bachelor of arts in the regular way, and be candidate for academical honors; but his inability to keep the necessary terms, in consequence of the illness which has been noticed, caused this intention to be abandoned; and in the spring of 1776 he was admitted to the degree of master of arts, to which his birth gave him a right, and which is usually conferred upon young men of a certain rank, after about two years residence in the university, without any public examination, or the performance of any public exercise, and of course without the power of giving public proof of their talents or attainments.

While Mr. Pitt was under-graduate, he never omitted attending chapel morning and evening, or dining in the public hall, except when prevented by indisposition. Nor did he pass a single evening out of the college walls. Indeed, most of his time was spent with me; and exclusively of the satisfaction I had in superintending the education of a young man of his uncommon abilities and thirst for improvement, his sweetness

of temper and vivacity of disposition endeared him to me in a degree, which I should in vain attempt to express.

Towards the latter end of the year 1776, Mr. Pitt began to mix with other young men of his own age and station in life, then resident at Cambridge; and no one was ever more admired and beloved by his acquaintance and friends. He was always the most lively person in company, abounding in playful wit and quick repartee; but never known to excite pain, or to give just ground of offence. Even those, who, from difference in political sentiments, or from any other cause, were not disposed to do him more than justice, could not but allow, that as a companion he was unrivalled. Though his society was universally sought, and from the age of seventeen or eighteen he constantly passed his evenings in company, he steadily avoided every species of irregularity; and he continued to pursue his studies with ardent zeal and unremitted diligence, during his whole residence in the university, which was protracted to the unusual length of nearly seven years, but with considerable intervals of absence. In the course of this time, I never knew him spend an idle day; nor did he ever fail to attend me at the appointed hour. At this early period there was the same firmness of principle, and rectitude of conduct, which marked his character in the more advanced stages of life.

It was my general rule to read with Mr. Pitt alternately, classics and mathematics; occasionally intermixing other branches of learning. He proceeded with a rapidity which can scarcely be conceived; and his memory was retentive in a degree of which I have known but few examples, although it had not been strengthened by the practice of repetition, so properly in

use at public schools, but often omitted in private education. A tutor is generally satisfied, if he can give his pupil some knowledge of an author, by selecting for his perusal certain parts of his works; but there was scarcely a Latin or a Greek classical writer of eminence, the whole of whose works Mr. Pitt and I did not read together. He was a nice observer of their different styles, and alive to all their various and characteristic excellencies. The quickness of his comprehension did not prevent close and minute application. When alone, he dwelt for hours upon striking passages of an orator or historian, in noticing their turn of expression, in marking their manner of arranging a narrative, or explaining the avowed or secret motives of action. A few pages sometimes occupied a whole morning. It was a favourite employment with him, to compare opposite speeches upon the same subject; and to examine how each speaker managed his own side of the question, and obviated or answered the reasoning of his opponent. This may properly be called study, peculiarly useful to a future lawyer or statesman. The authors, whom he preferred for this purpose, were Livy, Thucydides, and Sallust. Upon these occasions his observations were not unfrequently committed to paper, and furnished a topic for conversation with me at our next meeting. He was also in the habit of copying any eloquent sentence, or any beautiful or forcible expression, which occurred in his reading. The poets of Greece and Rome had their full share of his attention; and he unquestionably derived from them that advantage, as well as amusement, which they are eminently calculated to confer. So anxious was he to be acquainted with every Greek poet, that he read

CHAP. I.

with me, at his own request, the obscure and in general uninteresting work of Lycophron, and with an ease at first sight, which, if I had not witnessed it, I should have thought beyond the compass of human intellect. He was not fond of composition, not having been accustomed to it when a boy; nor did he attain that degree of excellence in writing Latin and Greek, which is often acquired by young men educated at our public schools.

It ought, perhaps, to be mentioned, that Mr. Pitt did not construe classical authors in the ordinary way, but read several sentences of the original, and then gave the translation of them; and the almost intuitive quickness, with which he instantly saw the meaning of the most difficult passages of the most difficult writers, made an impression upon my mind, which no time can efface. He possessed, indeed, this faculty in so extraordinary a degree, and his diligent application to Greek literature had rendered his knowledge of that language so correct and extensive, that I am persuaded, if a play of Menander or Æschylus, or an ode of Pindar, had been suddenly found, he would have understood it as soon as any professed scholar. There unquestionably have been persons who had far greater skill in verbal criticism, and in the laws of metre; but it may, I believe, be said with the strictest truth, that no one ever read the Greek language, even after devoting his whole life to the study of it, with greater facility than Mr. Pitt did at the age of twenty-one.

He was not less successful in mathematics and natural philosophy; displaying the same acuteness and readiness in acquiring knowledge, with an unexampled skill in applying it to the solution of problems. He was master of every thing usually

known by young men who obtain the highest academical honors, and felt a great desire to fathom still farther the depths of pure mathematics; and had I thought it right to indulge this inclination, he would have made a wonderful progress in that abstruse science. When the connexion of tutor and pupil was about to cease between us, he expressed a hope, that he should find leisure and opportunity to read Newton's Principia again with me after some summer circuit; and in the later periods of his life, he frequently declared that no portion of his time had been more usefully employed than that, which had been devoted to these studies—not merely from the new ideas and actual knowledge which he had thus acquired, but also on account of the improvement which his mind and understanding had received from the habit of close attention and patient investigation. In truth, this is the just and appropriate praise of mathematical pursuits, that they not only convey much important information, but give a strength and accuracy to the intellectual and reasoning powers, which best qualify young men, both for the duties of the liberal professions, and for the business of the higher departments of active life.

There was scarcely any book in the wide circuit of Mr. Pitt's reading, from which he derived greater advantage and satisfaction, than from Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding, of which he formed a complete and correct analysis. He was a great admirer of this truly excellent work, while he reprobated the author's notions on the origin of civil government, as unfounded and of dangerous tendency. He indicated no inclination, and he certainly had no encouragement from me, to carry his metaphysical studies any farther. He gave

great attention to the public lectures in civil law*, a subject which he considered as connected with his intended profession; and in the lectures upon experimental philosophy, he had a pleasure in seeing theoretical rules exemplified and confirmed. Amidst these severer studies, the lighter species of literature were by no means omitted; and I ought in particular to mention his intimate acquaintance with the historical and political writers of his own country†, and his elegant taste for the beauties of the English poets‡. To whatever branch of knowledge he applied, or whatever subject he discussed, the superiority of his abilities, and the clearness and comprehensiveness of his mind, were equally manifest. These eminent qualities were in no degree tarnished by pride or self-conceit, which are too often found in young men of distinguished talents. He was gentle and unassuming; and the natural cheerfulness of his temper, and unaffected urbanity of his manners, recommended him to persons of every age and station. Upon any topic which might arise in conversation, the openness of his character led him to express his opinion with a manly decision;

* These lectures were given with great credit by doctor Hallifax, professor of civil law, afterwards successively bishop of Gloucester and St. Asaph.

† Middleton's Life of Cicero, and the political and historical works of lord Bolingbroke, were favorite books with Mr. Pitt in point of style; as were also the works of Hume and Robertson. He was not an admirer of Johnson's style, and still less of Gibbon's. He read Barrow's Sermons, at the desire of lord Chatham, who thought them admirably calculated to furnish the copia verborum.

‡ Mr. Pitt, when young, occasionally wrote English verses. Before he went to the university, he was concerned with his brothers and sisters in writing a play in verse, consisting of five parts, which they acted before lord and lady Chatham, and some friends of the family.

but at the same time he always listened with a due regard and respectful attention to the sentiments of others; and such were the candor and mildness of his disposition, that when talking unreservedly with me, he never spoke with harshness or resentment even of those from whom he had received injurious treatment.

In May 1778, Mr. Pitt lost his great and excellent father, at a period when his advice and assistance would have been of the highest importance to him. I am happy to have it in my power to insert the following letters, which strongly mark the affectionate heart and amiable character of one of the ablest and most disinterested statesmen the world ever produced; and at the same time shew the opinion he entertained, and the expectations he had formed, of the subject of these memoirs.

The first of these letters was written by lord Chatham to Mr. Pitt, upon his going to the university in 1773.

" Burton Pynsent, Oct. 9th, 1773.

" Thursday's post brought us no letter from the dear traveller: We trust this day will prove more satisfactory; it is the happy day that gave us your brother, and will not be less in favour with all here, if it should give us, about four o'clock, an epistle from my dear William. By that hour, I reckon, we shall be warm in our cups, and shall not fail to pour forth, with renewed joy, grateful libations over the much wished tidings of your prosperous progress towards your destination. We compute, that yesterday brought you to the venerable aspect of alma mater; and that you are invested to-day with the toga virilis. Your race of *manly* virtue, and *useful* knowledge

is now begun, and may the favor of heaven smile upon the noble career!

"Little —— was really disappointed at not being in time to see you—a good mark for my young vivid friend. He is just as much compounded of the elements of *air* and *fire* as he was. A due proportion of terrestrial solidity will, I trust, come, and make him perfect. How happy, my loved boy, is it, that your mamma and I can tell ourselves, there is at Cambridge *one*, without a beard, "and all the elements so mixed in him, that nature might stand up, and say, This is a man." I now take leave for to-day, not meaning this for what James calls a *regular* letter, but a flying thought, that wings itself towards my absent William. Horses are ready, and all is birth-day.

"Bradshaw has shone, this auspicious morning, in a very fine speech of congratulation; but I foresee, "his sun sets weeping in the lowly west," that is, a fatal bowl of punch will, before night, quench this luminary of oratory. Adieu, again and again, sweet boy; and if you acquire health and strength every time I wish them to you, you will be a second Sampson, and, what is more, will, I am sure, keep your hair.

"Every good wish attends your kind fellow-traveller and *chumm*; nor will he be forgot in our flowing bowls to-day."

To this interesting letter, lady Chatham added the following postscript:

"If more could be said expressive of feelings, my dearest dear boy, I would add a letter to this epistle, but as it is composed, I will only sign to its expressive contents,

Your fond and loving mother,

HESTER CHATHAM."

The following letter was written by lord Chatham to Mr. Pitt, when he was recovering from the illness which has been mentioned:

" Burton Pynsent, Oct. 30, 1773.

" With what ease of mind and joy of heart I write to my loved William, since Mr. Wilson's comfortable letter of Monday! I do not mean to address you as a sick man: I trust in heaven, that *convalescent* is the only title I am to give you in the ailing tribe; and that you are now enjoying the happy advantage of Dr. Glynn's* acquaintance, as one of the cheerful and witty sons of Apollo, in his poetic, not his medical, attribute. But, though I indulge with inexpressible delight, the thought of your returning health, I cannot help being a little in pain, lest you should make *more haste than good speed* to be well. Your mamma has been before me, in suggesting that most useful proverb, *reculer pour mieux sauter*, useful to all, but to the *ardent, necessary*. You may indeed, my sweet boy, better than any one, practise this sage dictum, without any risque of being *thrown out* (as little James would say) in the *chace of learning*. All you want, at present, is *quiet*; with this, if your ardor αριστευειν can be *kept in*, till you are stronger, you will make *noise* enough. How happy the task, my noble amiable boy, to caution you *only against pursuing too much*, all those liberal and praise-worthy things, to which less happy natures are perpetually to be spurred and driven! I will not teaze you with too long a lecture

* This eminent physician and excellent scholar became warmly attached to Mr. Pitt, and was a great admirer of his talents and character. He frequently read with him select passages from classical writers, which he thought particularly deserving his notice.

in favor of *inaction*, and a competent *stupidity*, your two best *tutors* and *companions* at present. You have time to spare: consider there is but the *Encyclopedia*; and when you have mastered all that, what will remain? You will want, like Alexander, another world to conquer. Your mamma joins me in every word; and we know how much your affectionate mind can sacrifice to our earnest and tender wishes. Brothers and sisters are well; all feel about you, think and talk of you, as they ought. My affectionate remembrances go in great abundance to Mr. Wilson. Vive, Vale, is the unceasing prayer of your truly loving father, CHATHAM."

The above letter indicates great anxiety, beautifully expressed, lest Mr. Pitt should too soon resume his studies; and seems to shew, that on former occasions of illness, lord and lady Chatham had been under the necessity of restraining him. He recovered so slowly and so imperfectly before he left Cambridge, that he was unable to read any book which required much attention; and lord Chatham did not allow him to return to the university till the beginning of July, soon after which he wrote him the following letter, which proves the continuance of the same solicitude:

"Hayes, Sunday, July 17, 1774.

"Need I tell my dear William, that his letter, received this morning, diffused general joy here? To know that he is well and happy, and to be happy ourselves, is one and the same thing. I am glad that Chambers, Hall, and tufted Robe, continue to please; and make no doubt, that all the *nine*, in their

several departments of charming, will sue for your love with all their powers of enchantment. I know too well the danger of a *new amour* or of a *reviving passion*, not to have some fears for your discretion. Give any of these alluring ladies the meeting by *day-light*, and *in their turns*; not becoming the *slave* of any one of them; nor be drawn into late hours by the temptation of their sweet converse. I rejoice that college is not yet evacuated of its learned garrison; and I hope the governor of this fortress of science, the master, or his admirable aides-de-camp, the tutors, will not soon repair to their respective excursions. Dr. Brown, to whom I desire to present my best compliments, is very obliging in accommodating you with a stable. I hope with this aid Mr. Wilson's computation may not be out above one half, to bring it at all near the mark. I conclude, a horse's allowance at Cambridge is upon the scale of a sizar's commons. However it prove, I am glad to think you and he will find more convenience for riding at every spare hour that offers. Stucky will carry Mr. Wilson safely, and, I trust, not unpleasantly. The brothers of the turf may hold the solid contents of his shoulders and forehand somewhat cheap; but by Dan's leave, he is no uncreditable *clerical* steed. No news yet from Pitt. James is here, the flower of schoolboys.

Your loving father,

CHATHAM."

"Hayes, Sept. 2, 1774.

"I write, my dearest William, the post just going out, only to thank you for your most welcome letter, and for the affectionate anxiety you express for my situation, left behind in the hospital, when our flying camp moved to Stowe. Gout has

for the present subsided, and seems to intend deferring his favors till winter, if autumn will do its duty, and bless us with a course of steady weather; those days, which Madame de Sevigné so beautifully paints, *des jours filés d'or et de soye.*

" I have the pleasure to tell you, your mother and sisters returned perfectly well from Bucks, warm in praises of magnificent and princely Stowe; and full of due sentiments of the agreeable and kind reception they found there. No less than two dancings, in the short time they passed there. One escape from a wasp's nest, which proved only an adventure to talk of, by the incomparable skill and presence of mind of Mr. Cotton, driving our girls in his carriage with four very fine horses, and no postillion. They fell into an *ambuscade* of wasps more fierce than *Pandours*, who beset these coursers of spirit not inferior to *Xanthus* and *Podarges*, and stung them to madness; when disdaining the master's hand, he turned them short into a hedge, threw some of them, as he meant to do; and leaping down, seized the bridles of the leaders, which afforded time for your sisters to get out safe and sound, their honor, in point of courage, intact, as well as their bones; for they are celebrated not a little on their composure in this alarming situation. I rejoice that your time passes to your mind, in the evacuated seat of the Muses. However, knowing that those heavenly ladies (unlike the London fair) delight most, and spread their choicest charms and treasures in sweet retired solitude, I wo'n't wonder that their true votary is happy to be alone with them. Mr. Pretyman * will by no means spoil company, and I wish you joy of his return. How many commons have you lost of late?

* The author of these memoirs, who in 1803 changed his name from Pretyman to Tomline.

Whose fences have you broken; and in what lord of the manor's pound have any *strays of science* been found, since the famous adventure of catching the horses with such admirable address and alacrity? I beg my affectionate compliments to Mr. Wilson, and hope you will both beware of an inclosed country for the future. Little James is still with us, doing penance for the *high living* so well described to you in Mrs. Pam's excellent epistle. All loves follow my sweetest boy in more abundance than I have time or ability to express.

"I desire my best compliments to the kind and obliging master, who loves Cicero and you."

My readers will be sorry to learn, that the following is the last letter of lord Chatham, which I am able to submit to their perusal; it was written only seven or eight months before his death.

Hayes, Sept. 22, 1777.

"How can I employ my reviving pen so well as by addressing a few lines to the *hope* and *comfort* of my life, my dear William? You will have pleasure to see, under my own hand, that I mend every day, and that I am all but well. I have been this morning to Camden-place, and sustained, most manfully, a visit, and all the idle talk thereof, for above an hour by Mr. Norman's clock; and returned home, untired, to dinner, where I eat like a farmer. Lord Mahon has confounded, not convinced, the incorrigible *soi-disant* Dr. Wilson. Dr. Franklin's lightning, rebel as he is, stands proved the more innocent: and Wilson's nobs must yield to the pointed conductors. On Friday, lord Mahon's indefatigable spirit is to exhibit another incendium, to

lord mayor, foreign ministers, and all lovers of philosophy and the good of society; and means to illuminate the horizon with a little bonfire of twelve hundred faggots and a double edifice. Had our dear friend been born sooner, Nero and the second Charles could never have amused themselves by reducing to ashes the two noblest cities in the world. My hand begins to demand repose;—so, with my best compliments to Aristotle, Homer, Thucydides, Xenophon, not forgetting the civilians, and law of nations tribe, adieu, my dearest William.

Your ever most affectionate father,

CHATHAM."

EARLY in 1778, a sort of negotiation was carried on for some time, between sir James Wright, a friend of lord Bute, and Dr. Addington, a friend of lord Chatham, which seems to have been commenced by sir James Wright, with a view of ascertaining whether lord Chatham would join lord Bute in forming a new administration. Though this negotiation proved entirely fruitless, it became the subject of conversation in all political circles; and soon after lord Chatham's death, so partial and incorrect a statement relative to it, was made by persons connected with lord Bute, that it was thought proper to draw up a full and authentic account of what had really passed, from papers in the possession of lady Chatham. This account, after being shewn to private friends, found its way into some of the newspapers; and on the 23d of October, lord Mountstuart, lord Bute's eldest son, published a letter, addressed to the editors of the same newspapers, in which he controverted some of the positions contained in it. To this letter, Mr Pitt, the

present lord Chatham being then abroad, felt it incumbent on him to write an answer, which also appeared in the newspapers; and was considered as fully proving, that "lord Chatham had not only never courted a political negotiation with lord Bute, but would, without hesitation, have rejected every idea of acting with him in any administration *." I did not think it right to pass over entirely in silence, the transaction which first called Mr. Pitt into public notice, and which afforded him the first opportunity of testifying his zealous regard for his father's memory; but as he had very little concern in this business, which is no longer of an interesting nature, I shall not enter into any farther particulars †. It may, perhaps, be doubted whether sir James Wright and Dr. Addington did not act rather from their own views and motives, than from any specific authority of the noble persons whose names they used.

THE death of lord Chatham was soon followed by other domestic misfortunes. In the summer of 1780, Mr. Pitt lost his eldest sister, viscountess Mahon, to whom he was tenderly attached; and in November of the following year, his younger brother, Mr. James Pitt, who had been brought up to the navy, and risen to the rank of post-captain, died in the West Indies; a young man of great professional merit, of superior understanding, and of most amiable disposition. Upon the latter occasion, I received from Mr. Pitt the following letter, written at Burton Pynsent.

* Mr. Pitt's letter. I do not insert the whole of the letter, as it would have been scarcely intelligible without the papers to which it refers.

† They may be found in Dodsley's Annual Register for 1778.

" I can hardly bring myself to write under the severe blow which we have lately experienced, to the news of which, my dear Pretyman, you are probably not a stranger. You will, I know, be anxious to hear from me. I wish to say as little as possible on the melancholy subject, too melancholy indeed for words. I have to regret the loss of a brother, who had every thing that was most amiable and promising, every thing that I could love and admire; and I feel the favorite hope of my mind extinguished by this untimely blow. Let me, however, assure you, that I am too much tried in affliction not to be able to support myself under it; and that my poor mother and sister, to whom I brought the sad account yesterday, have not suffered in their health, from so severe a shock. I have prevailed on them to think of changing the scene, and moving towards Hayes, which is a great comfort to me, as the solitude and distance of this place must now be insupportable. I imagine that we shall begin our journey in a few days. Adieu. You shall hear from me soon again.

Your's most sincerely and affectionately,

W. PITT."

IN the spring of 1780, Mr. Pitt became resident in Lincoln's-inn, and regularly attended Westminster-hall. He had previously kept most of the necessary terms, and being called to the bar on the 12th of June, he went the western circuit in the summer of that year.

At the general election in the autumn of 1780, he was an unsuccessful candidate to represent the university of Cambridge in parliament; but in the January following he was

chosen for the borough of Appleby, in Westmoreland*; an event which gave great satisfaction to all who knew him, from a conviction, that he could not fail to distinguish himself as a speaker.

Mr. Pitt's entrance into public life was at a very critical and important moment. This country was engaged in war with her colonies in North America, and with France, Spain, and Holland, without a single ally to assist her in so unequal a contest. Besides these numerous and powerful enemies, a strong disposition to hostility had been recently manifested by Russia, Denmark, and Sweden, who had concluded treaties with each other, constituting what has been called the armed neutrality †, and understood to be more immediately directed against Great Britain. In India the native powers had entered into a most formidable confederacy, under the influence of France, for the

* Mr. Pitt had at this time no personal acquaintance with sir James Lowther, to whose interest in the borough of Appleby he was indebted for this introduction into parliament, at the request of their common friend, the duke of Rutland. This nobleman, when marquis of Granby and member for the university of Cambridge, had, from admiration of the talents and political principles of lord Chatham, at his own particular desire, become acquainted with Mr. Pitt, at an early period of his academical life. The closest connexion and warmest attachment took place and continued between them, during the whole of the duke's life; and at his death, in October 1787, he left Mr. Pitt one of the guardians to his children and trustees of his estate, with a legacy of 3,000*l.*

† By these treaties the contracting parties asserted, and mutually pledged themselves to maintain, the principle, that free ships make free goods; a principle totally inconsistent with the right, hitherto acknowledged to belong to belligerent powers, of searching the vessels of neutral states. Holland was a party to these treaties; and from the end of the year 1780, she was actually at war with Great Britain

CHAP. I. 1781.

declared purpose of expelling the British from that country; and their exertions had already been attended with a degree of success, which excited very serious alarm for the safety of our Eastern possessions. Nor was the situation of affairs at home more favorable: repeated failures in our naval and military operations had lowered the spirit of the people, and weakened their confidence in government; public credit was greatly depressed by the expences of the war; the value of landed property was much diminished; trade and manufactures were in a very reduced state; there was a material deficiency in the produce of the revenue; and the resources of the country were considered as nearly exhausted.

On the 26th of February, a circumstance of a very remarkable nature occasioned Mr. Pitt to make his first speech in the house of commons. The subject of debate was, Mr. Burke's bill for economical reform in the civil list. Lord Nugent was speaking against the bill; and Mr. Byng, member for Middlesex, knowing Mr. Pitt's sentiments upon the measure, asked him to reply to his lordship. Mr. Pitt gave a doubtful answer; but in the course of lord Nugent's speech, he determined not to reply to him. Mr. Byng, however, understood that Mr. Pitt intended to speak after lord Nugent: and the moment his lordship sat down, Mr. Byng and several of his friends, to whom he had communicated Mr. Pitt's supposed intention, called out, in the manner usual in the house of commons, Mr. Pitt's name as being about to speak. This probably prevented any other person from rising; and Mr. Pitt, finding himself thus called upon, and observing that the house waited to hear him, thought it necessary to rise. Though really not

intending to speak, he was from the beginning collected and unembarrassed; he argued strongly in favor of the bill, and noticed all the objections which had been urged by the noble lord who immediately preceded him in the debate, in a manner which greatly astonished all who heard him. Never were higher expectations formed of any person upon his first coming into parliament, and never were expectations more completely answered. They were indeed much more than answered: such were the fluency and accuracy of language, such the perspicuity of arrangement, and such the closeness of reasoning, and manly and dignified elocution—generally, even in a much less degree, the fruits of long habit and experience—that it could scarcely be believed to be the first speech of a young man not yet two-and-twenty.

On the following day, Mr. Pitt, knowing my anxiety upon every subject which related to him, with his accustomed kindness, wrote to me at Cambridge, to inform me, that "he had heard his own voice in the house of commons;" and modestly expressed his satisfaction at the manner in which his first attempt at parliamentary speaking had been received.

Before Mr. Pitt had a seat in parliament, he had been a constant attendant in the gallery of the house of commons, and near the throne in the house of lords, upon every important debate; and whenever he heard a speech of any merit on the side opposite to his own opinions, he accustomed himself to consider, as it proceeded, in what manner it might be answered; and when the speaker accorded with his own sentiments, he then observed his mode of arranging and enforcing his ideas, and considered whether any improvement could have

CHAP. I. 1781.

been made, or whether any argument had been omitted. To this habit, and to the practice already mentioned of reading Greek and Latin into English, joined to his wonderful natural endowments, may be attributed that talent for reply, and that command of language, for which he was from the first so highly distinguished. At whatever length he spoke, he avoided repetition; and it was early and justly observed of him, that "he never failed to put the best word in the best place."

On the 31st of May, Mr. Pitt made his second speech in the house of commons. The order of the day for going into a committee on the bill for continuing an act* of the last session, for the appointment of commissioners of public accounts, had been read; and upon the question being put for the speaker's leaving the chair, colonel Barré moved, "That it be an instruction to the committee, that they have power to make provision in the said bill, for removing the commissioners named by the said act†, and for substituting other commissioners in their stead, who are members of the house of commons." This motion was opposed by lord North, in a speech of considerable length,

* This was entitled, "An Act for appointing and enabling Commissioners to examine, take, and state the Public Accounts of the Kingdom, and to report what Balances are in the hands of Accountants, which may be applied to the Public Service, and what defects there are in the present mode of receiving, collecting, issuing, and accounting for the Public Money; and in what more expeditious and effectual, and less expensive manner, the said Services can in future be regulated and carried on for the benefit of the Public."

† These commissioners were not members of the house of commons. They had made several reports under the act of the preceding session; but, as they had not completed their business, the object of the present bill was to continue them for another year.

and immediately after he sat down, Mr. Pitt rose*. He was heard with that silent attention, which the recollection of his former display of abilities could not fail to command. In a strain of the same forcible and manly eloquence, and with the readiness and correctness of a person long habituated to public debate, he replied to every argument used by the minister. He strenuously contended, that the house of commons, who were by the constitution entrusted with the power of granting public money, and watching over, examining, and correcting the public expenditure, could not, consistently with the faithful discharge of their duty, delegate any part of that trust to persons who were not of their own body; that this was an unalienable privilege, to which the house chiefly owed their importance in the legislature, and their power of establishing economical regulations, and of alleviating national burdens. He concluded with these emphatic words: "I press these arguments upon you, to rouse you from your lethargy, to awaken your sleeping virtue, to excite you to timely acts of prudence and exertion; that after your country has met with disgrace and defeat abroad, you may not be enslaved at home; in short, that the liberty of the people, and the safety of the constitution, may not be buried in one grave, with the power, the opulence, and the glory of the nation." Although this speech, to which no one replied, appeared to make great impression upon the house, the motion was negatived by a majority of 98 to 42.

Mr. Pitt spoke for the third time on the 12th of June, upon

* Mr. Fox rose at the same time, but gave way to Mr. Pitt, and did not speak upon the question.

CHAP. I. 1781.

a motion of Mr. Fox, "That the house do resolve itself into a committee of the whole house, to take into consideration the present state of the American war," and in making that motion he declared that it was his intention to move in the committee, if it should be granted, the following resolution: "That his majesty's ministers ought immediately to take every possible measure for concluding peace with our American colonies." A long debate ensued, in which frequent mention was made of lord Chatham, as being favorable to the principle of the measures which had given rise to the war; and Mr. Pitt felt it necessary to notice what had been said. He rose at a late hour, when the house was fatigued, and the question loudly called for. But the moment it was perceived, that he was going to speak, the noise and impatience for the question ceased, and both sides of the house became silent and attentive; and as this speech contained not only his own sentiments, but those of his illustrious father, relative both to the origin and to the conduct of the American war, I shall transcribe a part of it from the parliamentary debates, to give some idea, though a very imperfect one, of Mr. Pitt's early and unpremeditated eloquence: He said that he was induced to rise, from certain expressions which had fallen from a right honorable gentleman on the floor*, and from another gentleman† on the other side of the house, relative to the ministerial and parliamentary conduct of a dear and most respected relation, with regard to the American war, and the successive measures by which it had been produced. He thought that it was his duty, as the son of that noble lord, and as a member of that house, to rise upon the

* Mr. Rigby. † Mr. Adam.

present occasion, to correct the gentlemen who had spoken, and to prevent the house from separating, under a persuasion that the conduct and sentiments of the noble lord were such as had been described. The silence of one so nearly connected and allied in blood and affection, might seem to countenance what had been so confidently, but erroneously, stated. There might be many gentlemen in the house, who were well acquainted with the political opinions of that noble person; to them no refutation of the assertions of that night would be necessary. But there might be others, who were entirely ignorant of them, or who knowing them but imperfectly, might be deceived by misrepresentations, perhaps unintentionally made.

Actuated by these motives, he thought it incumbent on him to state his relation's opinion, as it appeared in his public conduct, and as it came farther confirmed by private communication made to himself and the rest of his family. The noble person, whose name had been so often mentioned in the course of the evening, most heartily reprobated the American war in all its parts, as well with respect to the principle in which it was taken up, as its progress, and the ultimate objects to which it pointed. He had expressed himself uniformly so on the subject, and he was persuaded, never gave a vote or opinion in contradiction to those sentiments. This was well known to those who acted with him; there were many living testimonies of the truth of what he now said; and innumerable circumstances, in confirmation of it, could be adduced, if farther evidence were required.

The only opinion declared by his noble relation, which could have afforded the most distant color for the assertion which had

CHAP. I. 1781.

been made, was, that he thought the British legislature had a right to lay duties for the regulation of commerce in the colonies; duties incidental to the extension of trade, and calculated for the mutual benefit of both countries; but not a single tax or duty of any kind for the purpose of raising a revenue in America, to be remitted home, and to be disposable by the British parliament. This, however, was but a speculative opinion, totally different and distinct from the doctrines and measures which were productive of the war. Those measures, at least, which produced the riot at Boston, from whence it was acknowledged by every part of the house, the war originated, did not come within the above description. They were taxes upon the import, laid on expressly by the British parliament, collected under its authority, and intended for the British treasury; and were not even pretended to hold out any advantage to both countries, but to one only; neither were they directed to promote or extend the commerce of America, but merely to draw out of the pockets of the inhabitants of that country, certain sums of money for augmenting the revenues of this.

These were the true and genuine sentiments of the noble person alluded to. To infer, therefore, that, because he approved of one mode of conduct, which was not adopted, he approved of another system, which he had so frequently and openly reprobated, was a most extraordinary kind of logic indeed. But he could not think, that those who argued in this manner, expected to bring home conviction to the breast of any unprejudiced man.

After thus explaining his noble father's principles and con-

duct, he said, that with respect to himself, in whatever point of view he considered the American war, he was the more confirmed in the opinions he had early formed concerning its origin and tendency. It was conceived in injustice; it was brought forth and nurtured in folly; its footsteps were marked with blood, persecution, and devastation. It was productive of misery of every kind. The mischiefs, however, recoiled on this unhappy country, which was thus drained of its vital resources of men and treasure. And what had the British nation received in return? Nothing but a series of ineffective victories or severe defeats;—victories celebrated only by a temporary triumph over our brethren, whom we were endeavoring to trample down, and destroy; which filled the land with mourning for the loss of dear and valuable relations, slain in the vain attempt of enforcing unconditional submission, or with narratives of the glorious exertions of men, struggling under every difficulty and disadvantage, in the sacred cause of liberty. Where was the Englishman, who, on reading the accounts of these sanguinary and well-fought battles, could refrain from lamenting the loss of so much British blood spilled in such a contest? or from weeping, on whichever side victory might be declared? Add to this, the melancholy consideration, that to whatever quarter we looked, we could perceive nothing but natural and powerful enemies, or lukewarm and faithless friends, rejoicing in our calamities, and meditating our ultimate downfal. After dwelling with great force upon the evils already occasioned by the war, he concluded with warning ministers of the still more disastrous and fatal events which must inevitably attend its farther prosecution.

CHAP. I. 1781.

The lord advocate*, who had been an uniform supporter of the American war, and was one of the ablest debaters in favor of administration, replied to Mr. Pitt. After adverting, in general terms, to several persons who had taken part in the debate, he proceeded thus, with a sort of prophetic eulogy: "The honorable gentleman who spoke last, claims my particular approbation. I am unwilling to say to that honorable gentleman's face, what truth would exact from me were he absent; but even now, however unusual it may be, I must declare, that I find myself impelled to rejoice in the good fortune of my country, and my fellow-subjects, who are destined, at some future day, to derive the most important services from so happy an union of first-rate abilities, high integrity, bold and honest independency of conduct, and the most persuasive eloquence†." Mr. Fox's motion was lost by a majority of 172 to 99.

* Mr. Dundas, afterwards viscount Melville.

† Mr. Dundas also, in the same speech, paid the following just and elegant compliment to the late lord Chatham: In speaking of his lordship's last speech in the house of lords, he said, "These were almost the last words that upright minister and consummate statesman ever uttered. He was a man, whom, from my earliest youth, I was always taught to look up to with reverence and admiration before I had seen him. Every opportunity I have since had of becoming acquainted with him in his senatorial character, the more it has confirmed me in my early impressions; and he was no less great in his last awful exit, than in the most splendid actions of his political life. He held the language of a patriot and sound statesman; and the capaciousness of his soul was only equalled by the integrity of his mind and the goodness of his heart. There was a quickness of conception, a warmth of imagination, and a tone and firmness of mind, which were truly astonishing. He saw his object at a distance; and was unceasing in his endeavors to obtain it.

These were the only three occasions on which Mr. Pitt spoke in this session, which ended on the 18th of July *.

On the circuit of this summer, Mr. Pitt was employed in several election causes of great interest at Salisbury; and an argument which he delivered in the course of the trials, on the admissibility of a point of evidence, was much applauded by Mr. Justice Buller, who presided as judge. The highest compliments were also paid him by that eminent lawyer, Mr. Dunning, who was leading counsel on the same side; and every one who heard him on this, and the few other occasions on which he spoke in a court of justice, was convinced, that he was peculiarly suited to the profession in which he had engaged †. He passed the autumn with his mother at Burton

* After the close of the session in which Mr. Pitt made these three speeches, a friend of Mr. Fox told me, that upon his saying to Mr. Fox, "Mr. Pitt, I think, promises to be one of the first speakers ever heard in the house of commons," Mr. Fox instantly replied, "He is so already." From this and other testimonies, it appears, that Mr. Fox was very early impressed with a high idea of Mr. Pitt's talents. It ought to be mentioned to the mutual credit of these two great men, that in future life, when they were the leaders of two opposite parties, and the supporters of different systems of politics, they always in private spoke of each other's abilities with the highest respect. Mr. Fox, at a late period of Mr. Pitt's first administration, said, that "he had been narrowly watching Mr. Pitt for many years, and could never catch him tripping once;" and in conversation with me, I always noticed, that Mr. Pitt considered Mr. Fox as far superior to any other of his opponents, as a debater in the house of commons.

† Since I wrote the above, I have been favored with the following communication from a gentleman, who was many years a member of the house of commons, and now holds an honorable station in the court of chancery: he was very intimate with Mr. Pitt on the western circuit, and afterwards, till they were

CHAP. I. 1781.

Pynsent, (where I joined him for some time,) and in visiting his friends, till he was called to London by the beginning of term in the early part of November.

separated in 1792 by a difference of political opinions. "Among lively men of his own time of life, Mr. Pitt was always the most lively and convivial in the many hours of leisure which occur to young unoccupied men on a circuit; and joined all the little excursions to Southampton, Weymouth, and such parties of amusement as were habitually formed. He was extremely popular. His name and reputation of high acquirements at the university, commanded the attention of his seniors. His wit, his good humour, and joyous manners, endeared him to the younger part of the bar. In some bribery causes from Cricklade, he was retained as junior counsel; but even in that subordinate character, he had an opportunity of arguing a point of evidence with extraordinary ability. I remember also, in an action of crim. con. at Exeter, as junior counsel, he manifested such talents in cross-examination, that it was the universal opinion of the bar, that he should have led the cause. During his short stay in the profession, he never had occasion to address a jury; but upon a motion in the court of king's bench, for an habeas corpus to bring up a man to be bailed, who was charged with murder, Mr. Pitt made a speech which excited the admiration of the bar, and drew down very complimentary approbation from lord Mansfield. When he first made his brilliant display in parliament, those at the bar who had seen little of him, expressed surprise; but a few who had heard him once speak in a sort of mock debate at the Crown and Anchor tavern, when a club, called the Western Circuit Club, was dissolved, agreed, that he had then displayed all the various species of eloquence, for which he was afterwards celebrated. Before he distinguished himself in the house of commons, he certainly looked seriously to the law as a profession. The late Mr. Justice Rooke told me, that Mr. Pitt dangled seven days with a junior brief and a single guinea fee, waiting till a cause of no sort of importance should come on in the court of common pleas. At Mr. Pitt's instance, an annual dinner took place for some years at Richmond Hill, the party consisting of lord Erskine, lord Redesdale, sir William Grant, Mr. Bond, Mr. Leycester, Mr. Jekyll, and others; and I well remember a dinner with Mr. Pitt and several of his private friends, at the Boar's Head in Eastcheap, in celebration of Shakespeare's Falstaff. We were all in high spirits, quoting and

PARLIAMENT met on the 27th of November, and upon the usual motion for an address to his majesty, Mr. Fox moved, as an amendment, to omit all that part which might be considered as pledging the house to a continuance of the American war; and he proposed to substitute in its room this sentence, "And we will, without delay, apply ourselves with united hearts to prepare and digest such counsels, as may in this crisis excite the efforts, point the arms, and by a total change of system command the confidence of all his majesty's subjects:" This amendment, for which Mr. Pitt voted without speaking, was rejected by a majority of 218 to 129. The following day, upon the report of the address, Mr. Pitt spoke early in the debate, and argued strongly and powerfully against persevering in the American war, "which fruitlessly wasted the blood and treasure of the kingdom, without even a rational object;" and he inveighed with great severity against the incapacity of ministers, who, "by their fatal system, had led the country, step by step, to the most calamitous and disgraceful situation to which a once flourishing and glorious empire could possibly be driven—a situation which threatened the final dissolution of the empire, if not prevented by timely, wise, and vigorous efforts."

The applause in the house was so great when Mr. Pitt sat down, that it was some time before the lord advocate, who rose

alluding to Shakespeare the whole day; and it appeared, that Mr. Pitt was as well and familiarly read in the poet's works as the best Shakespearians present. But to speak of his conviviality is needless. After he was minister, he continued to ask his old circuit intimates to dine with him, and his manners were unaltered."

CHAP. I. 1781.

immediately, could be heard: He began by saying, that "the lustre of abilities and splendor of eloquence displayed by the honorable gentleman who spoke last, having proved that an astonishing extent and force of understanding had descended, in an hereditary line, from a parent uncommonly gifted to a son equally endowed with all the fire, and strength, and grace of oratory, it did not at all surprize him, that an involuntary emotion of applause should burst out on the conclusion of the speech the house had just heard; and that each gentleman should be anxious to communicate to his neighbour his approbation of it." Mr. Fox afterwards noticed the universal admiration which Mr. Pitt's speech had excited; and Mr. Courtenay said, that Mr. Pitt's "splendid diction, his manly elocution, his brilliant periods, his pointed logic, conveyed in a torrent of rapid and impressive eloquence, brought strongly to his recollection that great and able statesman*, whose memory every grateful and generous Briton revered." The motion for bringing up the address was carried by a majority of 131 to 54.

On the 12th of December, the day fixed for voting the army estimates, previously to the house going into a committee for that purpose, sir James Lowther moved, "That it is the opinion of this house, that the war carried on in the colonies and plantations of North America, has proved ineffectual, either for the protection of his majesty's loyal subjects in the said colonies, or for defeating the dangerous designs of our enemies;" and he gave notice, that if this motion should be carried, he would then move, "That it is the opinion of this house, that

* Lord Chatham.

under the present circumstances of the country, all farther attempts to reduce the revolted colonies to obedience, are contrary to the interests of this kingdom, as tending to weaken its efforts against its antient and powerful enemies." Mr. Pitt took no part in the debate; but he was one of 179 who voted for the motion—220 voted against it.

This division was the first symptom of a change of opinion in the house of commons, relative to the American war; and that change was to be attributed to the intelligence recently received of the surrender of lord Cornwallis and his army at York-town, in Virginia. No blame whatever was imputed either to the general or to his troops; but this disaster had great effect in opening the eyes of parliament, and also of the public, to the folly and impracticability of continuing the war; and it compelled even lord North, lord George Germaine, and the lord advocate, to acknowledge that some alteration must be made in the system hitherto pursued; but while they admitted the necessity of changing the plan, they were by no means explicit or consistent in describing the manner in which the war was hereafter to be prosecuted.

Two days afterwards, the house being in a committee of supply upon the army estimates*, Mr. Pitt pointed out the opposite declarations of lord North and lord George Germaine, who had preceded him in the debate, with respect to the future conduct of the American war; and while he was

* The debate on sir James Lowther's motion having lasted till two o'clock the next morning, the house only went into a committee pro formâ, and it was agreed, that the business of the army estimates should be deferred to the 14th.

CHAP. I. 1781.

dwelling with great force and effect upon the contradiction between the prime minister and the secretary of state for the American department, he observed lord North, lord George Germaine, and Mr. Welbore Ellis, whispering together—he immediately interrupted his argument, and said, he would pause, till harmony was restored between the two noble lords; and with a happy classical allusion truly characteristic of the three persons, he added, "Nestor will compose the difference between Agamemnon and Achilles." This speech extorted praise from Mr. Rigby, then paymaster of the forces—he paid many compliments to "the representative of lord Chatham," as he called Mr. Pitt, and said, "that his oratory was not less persuasive, his abilities not less powerful, his virtues not less splendid; nay, he made no scruple to declare, that he regarded him as a still greater orator than his noble and admired father: he had observed with amazement and pleasure the effect which his eloquence had produced, and the awe, the hope, and the animation which it inspired." He acknowledged the inconsistency between the assertions of lord North and lord George Germaine, and confessed that he was convinced, by events and facts, of the impracticability of conquering America. Lord Nugent followed Mr. Rigby; and though he had been a strenuous supporter of all the measures of administration respecting America, he now admitted the necessity of renouncing the war, and of declaring America independent. Towards the end of the debate, Mr. Fox said, that Mr. Pitt, "with that commanding eloquence, which even the effrontery of ministers could not resist, had detected and exposed the glaring and abandoned disunion which subsisted in his majesty's councils."

Ministers, however, were triumphant by a majority of 166 to 84. These were the only two occasions upon which Mr. Pitt spoke before the Christmas recess.

The house of commons met on Monday the 21st of January, after their adjournment for the holidays; and on the 24th, Mr. Fox concluded a long and comprehensive speech, in which he entered very fully into the misconduct of the board of admiralty, by moving, "That it be referred to a committee, to inquire into the causes of the want of success of his majesty's naval forces, during this war, and more particularly during the year 1781." This motion, after some observations from lord North, and several other members, being agreed to without a division, Mr. Fox proposed that the inquiry should take place in a committee of the whole house, on that day se'nnight, which was unanimously agreed to, without a single remark. He then proceeded to move for a variety of papers, as necessary to the object of the inquiry, among which were communications of intelligence received from persons employed abroad, relative to the equipments and movements of the enemies' fleets. Lord North and lord Mulgrave (one of the lords of the admiralty, himself a naval man, and in the confidence of lord Sandwich, the first lord,) objected to the production of letters and documents containing this intelligence, upon the ground, that they might inform the enemy of the names of the persons by whom the intelligence was communicated, and thereby endanger their lives; and also reveal particulars, which, if concealed, might be serviceable to the future operations of our navy. To obviate the former of these objections, Mr. Pitt suggested, that the substance only of the

CHAP. I. 1782.

intelligence communicated, and not the letters themselves, should be laid before the house; and this suggestion being adopted, fifteen motions were acceded to without a division. Mr. Fox consented to defer the motions to which the other objection applied, in order to give the lords of the admiralty time to consider, whether the papers to which they related, might be granted with safety. The result was, that all the motions for papers were suffered to pass on following days; but, it being foreseen that the preparation of these papers, which were very numerous, must occupy a long time, lord Mulgrave proposed that the debate should be postponed to the 7th of February, to which Mr. Pitt and other opposition members reluctantly consented.

On that day Mr. Fox, in a long and able speech, brought five charges against the board of admiralty, grounded upon the papers then before the house, and concluded by moving, "That it appears to this committee, that there was gross mismanagement in the administration of naval affairs in the year 1781." Mr. Pitt supported this resolution; but in the course of his speech, he said, that he should have preferred a motion for the removal of lord Sandwich, the first lord of the admiralty, to whom he imputed all the naval disasters and disgraces which had befallen the country. Mr. Fox's motion was negatived by a majority of only 22, the numbers being 205 and 183. So small a majority in so full a house, and upon so important a question as the conduct of the navy in the time of war, was a clear proof that the confidence of parliament in administration was considerably lessened.

On the 13th of February, Mr. Fox gave notice, that, as his

motion on the preceding Thursday, having been made and negatived in a committee, could not be entered upon the journals, he should, with a view to its being there recorded, move in the House, on the Wednesday following, a resolution, substantially, if not literally, the same, as that which had been rejected in the committee. Accordingly, on the 20th of February, after a short speech, he moved, "That it appears to this house, that there has been great mismanagement in the conduct of his majesty's naval affairs in the year 1781." Mr. Pitt highly distinguished himself in this debate; he went through a very accurate detail of all the naval events of the preceding year, and commented upon each with uncommon acuteness and force of reasoning. He pointed out in what particulars there had been neglect; and earnestly conjured the house to consider the real importance of the question before them, a question upon which possibly the very being and existence of the country depended. He declared that he supported the motion from motives of a public nature, and from those motives only. He was too young to be supposed capable of entertaining any personal enmity against the earl of Sandwich; and he trusted that when he should be less young, it would appear, that he had early determined, in the most solemn manner, never to suffer any private or personal consideration whatever to influence his public conduct at any one moment of his life*. Mr. Dunning, in a subsequent part of the debate, alluding to this speech of Mr. Pitt, said, that almost all the sentiments, which he had collected in his own mind

* This was not merely an ebullition of youthful patriotism, but a principle to which he adhered throughout life.

upon the subject, had vanished away like a dream, on the bursting forth of a torrent of eloquence behind him, from the greatest prodigy that ever perhaps was seen in this or in any other country, an honorable gentleman, possessing the full vigor of youth, united with the experience and wisdom of the maturest age. The house divided, and the numbers were, for the motion 217, and against it 236. Thus the majority was decreased, although the number of members present was greater than upon the former occasion.

The opposition considering themselves sufficiently encouraged by the late divisions, to persevere in their motions against the administration, general Conway, two days afterwards, moved, "That an humble address be presented to his majesty, earnestly imploring his majesty, that taking into his royal consideration the many and great calamities which have attended the present unfortunate war, and the heavy burdens thereby brought on his loyal and affectionate people, he will be pleased graciously to listen to the humble prayer and advice of his faithful commons, that the war on the continent of North America may no longer be pursued for the impracticable purpose of reducing the inhabitants of that country to obedience by force; and expressing their hope, that the earnest desire and diligent exertion to restore the public tranquillity, of which we have received his majesty's gracious assurances, may, by a happy reconciliation with the revolted colonies, be forwarded and made effectual, to which great end his majesty's faithful commons will be ready most cheerfully to give their utmost assistance." In the debate which followed, Mr. Pitt, with his usual eloquence, contended for the necessity of putting an

immediate end to the American war: upon a division, the numbers were, for the motion 193; against it 194.

This division, although it did not take place till two o'clock in the morning, was followed by a conversation relative to the time of opening the budget, in which lord North called the language used by colonel Barré, "insolent and brutal." These epithets excited great clamor in the house; and several members, and among the rest, Mr. Pitt, required that lord North should apologize for them, not only to colonel Barré, but also to the house. Lord North made a satisfactory apology in two short speeches; in one of which he acknowledged, that he had been irritated by colonel Barré's expressions, which, he said, he ought not to have been, accustomed as he was to parliamentary abuse. He added, that he was certain the house would give him credit, when he said, that he took abuse as patiently as any man. All who knew lord North, knew this to be true; but soon after the apology was admitted on all sides to be sufficient, colonel Barré was proceeding still to complain of the word "brutal," as applied to him by lord North, upon which the speaker interposed, and the conversation ended.

On the following Monday, general Conway gave notice, that on Wednesday he would make a motion as nearly the same as that which he had made on the preceding Friday, as the rules of the house would admit. He said, that considering the very small majority by which his last motion had been rejected, and the absence of many members upon that occasion, it did not appear to him, that the sense of the house had been fully taken; and therefore he was desirous of giving

CHAP. I. 1782.

every member then in town an opportunity of declaring by his vote, his opinion respecting the farther prosecution of the American war.

Conformably to this notice, he moved, on the 27th, the following resolution, "That it is the opinion of this house, that the farther prosecution of offensive war on the continent of North America, for the purpose of reducing the revolted colonies to obedience by force, will be the means of weakening the efforts of this country against her European enemies, tends, under the present circumstances, dangerously to increase the mutual enmity, so fatal to the interests both of Great Britain and America, and by preventing a happy reconciliation with that country, to frustrate the earnest desire graciously expressed by his majesty, to restore the blessings of public tranquillity." In the debate which took place upon this motion, lord North spoke at considerable length. He was followed by the attorney general*, who acknowledged that nothing but peace with America could restore this country to its former state of splendor and respect; and considering a truce with America as the best means of attaining that object, he informed the house, that he had prepared a motion for leave to bring in a bill to enable his majesty's ministers to treat upon that ground: he therefore moved, "That the debate be adjourned till this day fortnight." Mr. Pitt, in a speech which was allowed on all hands to be the best and most forcible in point of argument, and the most brilliant and persuasive in point of eloquence, which he had ever delivered in parliament, replied fully both to lord North and to the attorney general. He

* Mr. Wallace.

censured the idea of a truce and the motion for adjournment, as a manœuvre to gain a few votes, and treated the whole proposal as made for the purpose of imposing upon the house, by holding out a delusive hope; and in referring to an assurance from lord North, that government was inclined to listen to terms of accommodation with America, he said, that no confidence was to be placed in the present ministers, all whose promises had ended in deception and disappointment, and who did not agree in any one plan or principle. At half past one o'clock, the house divided upon the attorney general's motion for adjournment, which was negatived by a majority of 234 to 215. The minister, being thus left in a minority, suffered the original resolution to pass without a division.

General Conway then moved an address to the king, nearly in the words of the resolution; to which, when presented by the whole house, two days afterwards, his majesty returned the following answer: "There are no objects nearer to my heart than the ease, happiness, and prosperity of my people. You may be assured, that, in pursuance of your advice, I shall take such measures as shall appear to me most conducive to the restoration of harmony between Great Britain and the revolted colonies, so essential to the prosperity of both; and that my efforts shall be directed in the most effectual manner against our European enemies, until such a peace can be obtained, as shall consist with the interests and permanent welfare of my kingdoms." Upon this answer being reported to the house on the fourth of March, general Conway rose and said, that although his majesty had not expressed himself quite so explicitly as might have been wished, yet he thought it right and proper,

CHAP. I. 1782.

that the house should return his majesty thanks for the pacific disposition manifested in his answer; and therefore he moved an address to that effect, which was carried without division or debate, and was ordered to be presented by such members of the house as were of the privy council. He then moved, "That after the solemn declaration of the opinion of this house, in their humble address presented to his majesty on Friday last, and his majesty's assurance of his gracious intention, in pursuance of their advice, to take such measures as shall appear to his majesty to be most conducive to the restoration of harmony between Great Britain and the revolted colonies, so essential to the prosperity of both, this house will consider as enemies to his majesty and this country, all those who shall endeavor to frustrate his majesty's paternal care for the ease and happiness of his people, by advising, or by any means attempting, the farther prosecution of offensive war on the continent of North America, for the purpose of reducing the revolted colonies to obedience by force." Several objections were at first made to this motion, and lord Howe proposed an amendment. Mr. Pitt, however, answered the objections, and lord Howe withdrew his amendment. The debate was then continued upon the original motion, and Mr. Pitt made a short reply to Mr. Rigby. The motion was at length carried without a division; and thus the same house of commons, who, at the end of November, had by a great majority voted an address to his majesty, promising their support of the American war, in the beginning of the following March pronounced every man an enemy to his king and country, who should recommend, or in any respect promote, the continuance of that war.

Although ministers had been compelled by a majority of the house of commons, to abandon their favorite measure of the American war, yet they continued in office, and indicated no intention of resigning. The members of opposition, therefore, having succeeded in one great object, thought they might now proceed to a more general attack upon the administration; and accordingly, lord John Cavendish, on the 8th of March, moved four resolutions, the first of which asserted, that the expences of the army, navy, and ordnance, since the year 1775, had amounted to upwards of 100 millions; the second enumerated the territorial losses which we had sustained during that period; the third asserted, that we were still engaged in war with France, Spain, and Holland, without a single ally; and the fourth attributed these misfortunes to the want of foresight and ability in his majesty's ministers. Mr. Powys, in seconding these resolutions, said, that among those, who opposed the present administration, were men of the first abilities in the kingdom, the representatives of the most opulent families in the nation, and the descendants of all that was great, all that was illustrious; and particularly alluding to Mr. Pitt, he called him the "heir of his father's virtues and unexampled talents; the son of a man, who had carried the British name to the very highest pinnacle of glory." The first three resolutions, containing plain matters of fact, could not be controverted; but upon the fourth there was a long debate, towards the end of which Mr. Pitt replied to lord North; he contended, that the king's speeches proved, that the noble lord must have been guilty either of delusion or of want of foresight; that the noble lord's declared hostility to the resolution of the

CHAP. I. 1782.

house, relative to the American war, was of itself a sufficient reason for withdrawing all confidence from him; and that a change of ministers would afford the only chance for the salvation of the country. The secretary at war moved the order of the day, upon which the house divided; and administration had a majority of ten, the numbers being 226 and 216.

The smallness of this majority upon such a question convinced every one, that ministers could not long maintain their situations; but as they still manifested no design of retiring, sir John Rous, on the 15th of March, moved a resolution, which comprehended the substance, though in somewhat different words, of the four resolutions, which had been moved a week before, by lord John Cavendish. In the debate of this day Mr. Pitt replied to the lord advocate, and particularly dwelt upon the learned lord's confession, that the present ministers had not the confidence of the people. He said, "that lord North's administration had been an administration of influence and intrigue, and that it was generally acknowledged, that he and his colleagues were unfit for the purposes of government." He spoke with great animation and warmth, and concluded with confessing "that he was agitated more than he had ever been upon any former occasion, as he could not avoid feeling for his country, in the mortifying distress of being governed by men, who had neither sensibility nor shame; who were as void of feeling as they were of every other valuable quality, which constitutes the great statesman and the powerful minister." He most strenuously recommended the motion, as the only means of presenting to the eyes of the

world, what he had read of with rapture, but almost despaired of seeing, "a patriot king, presiding over an united people." The house divided upon the question, and the numbers were, 236 for ministers, and 227 against them. While the division was taking place, Mr. Fox gave notice, that a similar motion would be made on the Wednesday following.

On that day, at the usual hour, and in a very full house, lord Surry rose to make the promised motion; and lord North stood up at the same moment. Neither of these noble lords being willing to give way to the other, and both remaining upon their legs, great clamor and confusion arose; but at length, after several members, and among the rest, Mr. Pitt, had delivered their sentiments upon the point of order, lord North was permitted to speak, but not without interruption: he said, that he had risen for the purpose of informing the house, that there was now no occasion for the motion, the purport of which had been announced on a former day, as those persons, who had for some time conducted the public affairs, had ceased to be his majesty's ministers. They were no longer to be considered as men holding the reins of government, and transacting measures of state; but merely remaining to do their official duty, till other ministers should take their places. The sooner these ministers were appointed, the better it would be, in his judgment, for the public business, and for the general interests of the nation. Mr. Pitt, rising immediately, said, that the declaration which the house had just heard from the noble lord, appeared to him to render the intended motion unnecessary, its object being already accomplished; and lord John Cavendish, Mr. Fox, lord Surry, general Conway,

CHAP. I. 1782.

and several other members concurring in that opinion, the house adjourned to Monday, to give time for making the new arrangements.

In a few days an administration was formed consisting of the marquis of Rockingham first lord of the treasury *, the earl of Shelburne and Mr. Fox secretaries of state, admiral Keppel (created viscount Keppel) first lord of the admiralty, lord John Cavendish chancellor of the exchequer, lord Camden president of the council, the duke of Grafton lord privy seal, general Conway commander in chief, Mr. Dunning (created lord Ashburton) chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster, and lord Thurlow, who continued lord chancellor.

I have thought it right to notice particularly all the motions made in the house of commons, the object of which was the removal of lord North and his colleagues from office, for the purpose of shewing the very prominent part, which Mr. Pitt, young as he was, both as a man and as a member of parliament, took upon almost every one of those occasions. He frequently suggested modes of proceeding, when difficulties occurred; he constantly replied to the principal speakers on the opposite side; and though he had been scarcely twelve months in parliament, and was not yet twenty-three years of

* On Thursday, the day after lord North had announced his resignation in the house of commons, the king sent for lord Shelburne, and offered to appoint him first lord of the treasury; but lord Shelburne informed his majesty, that in his judgment no one could at present fill that situation except lord Rockingham. Lord Shelburne alluded to this circumstance in his speech in the house of lords, on the 11th of the following July, when he lamented the death of lord Rockingham.

age, he answered their arguments and objections with the readiness and exactness of the most experienced debater, and in a style of oratory, so dignified and brilliant, that at this early dawn he was compared to his illustrious father in his meridian splendor. The immediate subjects of these motions were, the impolicy of continuing the American war, the conduct of the board of admiralty, the internal situation of the country, the want of foreign alliances, and various other points brought forward to prove, that ministers were no longer entitled to the confidence of the house. The discussion of these comprehensive and important subjects afforded Mr. Pitt an opportunity of declaring his political principles, and his general ideas of the British constitution, and of displaying a force of eloquence, and a fund of knowledge, which called forth, as we have seen, the highest commendations, not only from his friends, and those of his own party, but also from persons perfectly unconnected with him, and who differed very widely from him in sentiments and in conduct. He gave indeed such decisive proof of his possessing very extraordinary talents, that the new ministers, in forming their arrangements, offered him several situations*, and among others a vice-treasurership of Ireland, an office of considerable rank and emolument, which, it was thought, would be the more acceptable to him, as it had been formerly held by his father; but he resolutely declined this and every other offer, preferring his profession of the law to any official connexion with an administration,

* These offers were made through lord Shelburne, Mr. Pitt having very little acquaintance with lord Rockingham or any of his party.

CHAP. I. 1782.

of which he did not form a part—he had indeed determined, as he soon afterwards declared publicly, never to accept any subordinate office, meaning an office, which did not entitle him to a seat in the cabinet. This determination did not proceed from any overweening self-opinion, or reprehensible ambition, but from an unwillingness to be considered as pledged to measures, in framing which he had no concern.

As a private member he was regular in his attendance upon the house of commons, and gave his general support to the measures of government.

It being thought desirable to ascertain the expences of the American war, and of the war with the European powers consequent upon it, and also what part of them still remained to be provided for, a committee of 15 persons was appointed by the house of commons, on the 2nd of May, to enquire into and report to the house, the amount of the expences of the navy, army, and ordnance, of the sums borrowed, and of the annual produce of the taxes imposed for the payment of interest upon loans, from the 5th of January 1776 to April 5, 1782; together with the state of the public debts, both funded and unfunded, at the beginning of every year of the above period. Mr. Pitt was chosen a member of this committee by a great majority of votes*, but did not take an active part in preparing its report, being at this time engaged in professional attendance in Westminster Hall.

* Mr. Pitt had 247 votes, and no other person had more than 165, except Mr. Thomas Pitt, who proposed the committee and had 249 votes.

DURING the administration of lord North, many of his principal opponents had complained, that the people of England were very imperfectly represented in the house of commons, and associations were formed in different parts of the kingdom, for the purpose of obtaining what was called a reform of parliament*. It was urged, that the counties sent a very inadequate number of members, and that many very small boroughs had each two representatives, in most cases chosen through the influence of some peer or person of large property, or by means corrupt and disgraceful, while some of the most populous and important towns had no representative. All this was said to be a gross departure from the original principles of the constitution, and as calling aloud for correction. The present was thought a favorable time for bringing this question before the legislature, and a general meeting of the friends of parliamentary reform was held at the house of the duke of Richmond, in London, at which it was determined, that a motion upon the subject should be immediately submitted to the house of commons. Mr. Pitt was fixed upon as the fittest person to make this motion; and the selection of him for the conduct of a business, which had excited an eager anxiety both in and out of parliament, and which from its delicacy and importance required no ordinary qualifications, is another proof of the high opinion, which was already entertained of his judgment and abilities.

On the 7th of May, after the call of the house had taken place, (which was appointed for that day, in order to secure

* These associations began in 1779.

CHAP. I. 1782.

a full attendance,) Mr. Pitt brought forward this interesting question, in a speech of considerable length. Having apologized for undertaking a task, which required so much greater ability and experience than he possessed, he proceeded to observe, that the inadequate representation of the people in parliament had long engaged the attention of the public, and that men the most enlightened had maintained the necessity of a calm revision of the principles of the constitution, and of a moderate and substantial reform of those defects, which had gradually and imperceptibly stolen in to deface, and now at last threatened to destroy, the most beautiful fabric of government in the world. He particularly mentioned his father, who was not apt to indulge vague and chimerical speculations inconsistent with practice and expediency, as a decided friend to parliamentary reform; and upon these authorities he entreated gentlemen not to be deterred from attempting to remove the acknowledged abuses of the constitution, by a fear of injuring what they so much and so deservedly loved and revered: they ought rather to be anxious to apply a timely remedy, lest this nation, with the best capacities for grandeur and happiness of any on the face of the earth, should be confounded with the mass of those, whose liberties were subverted and lost. He spoke with great severity of the corrupt influence which caused a perseverance in the American war, contrary to the sense of the people; and after commending in terms equally strong, the honorable and patriotic manner in which the king's government was now conducted, he called upon the house to seize the favorable opportunity of restoring the purity of election. He contended

that the present state of the house of commons was totally different from its original construction; and that as there ceased to be the connexion designed by our ancestors between the representatives and their constituents, to correct that abuse would be, not an innovation, but a recovery of the constitution. He did not at that time mean to discuss what would be the best species of reform; but only to propose the appointment of a committee for the purpose of investigating the subject, and reporting their opinion of the plan which ought to be adopted, and of the most proper method of carrying it into execution. He stated some facts and circumstances to prove, that members were chosen by boroughs, which had no one quality of representation, no population, no trade, no share in the general interests of the country, no stake to entitle them to that distinction, but were either under the command of the treasury, or of some great and powerful individual; or else the electors sold their votes to such persons as would purchase them at the highest price: it was well known, he said, that by means of such boroughs the nabob of Arcot had seven or eight members in the house of commons; which led him to argue upon the impropriety and danger of a foreign influence being allowed to creep into our national councils. The corruption, of which he complained, was the natural effect of the wide limits of our empire, and of the broad and great scale upon which its operations were conducted: "it had grown with our growth, and strengthened with our strength;" but unhappily it had not decayed with our decay, nor diminished with our decrease: it still existed in its full force, and had supported a late administration against all

CHAP. I. 1782.

the consequences of a mischievous system and a dismembered empire. To prevent the recurrence and extension of this evil, he was anxious to establish a more solid and equal representation, by reviving the true constitutional connexion between parliament and the people; and therefore he moved, "That a committee be appointed to examine into the present state of the representation of the commons of Great Britain in parliament, to report the same to the house, and likewise what steps in their opinion it may be proper for parliament to take concerning the same." Mr. Sawbridge, in seconding the motion, spoke of Mr. Pitt's speech, as displaying "that great and astonishing ability, for which he was so justly distinguished*." The motion, however, although supported by Mr. Fox and several other persons in office, was lost by a majority of 20, the numbers being 161 and 141.

It is not to be inferred from this majority, that no defect was supposed to exist in the present construction of the house of commons, and no departure to have taken place from the

* Mr. Fox, in addressing the electors of Westminster on the 17th of July in this year, said, "A motion for parliamentary reform was made in the house of commons, by a young man of the most signal abilities, and whose public conduct had so entirely concurred with your own sentiments and wishes, that you expressed a desire for him to become one of your representatives in parliament. The honorable author of this motion (I mean Mr. William Pitt,) supported it in the house with all that ability, which characterizes him, and with all that firmness, integrity, and dignity, which, I believe, to be no less in the number of his excellencies." It is to be observed, that this declaration was made after Mr. Fox had resigned the seals as secretary of state, and after Mr. Pitt was appointed chancellor of the exchequer; that is, after the little connexion, which had subsisted between Mr. Fox and Mr. Pitt, had ceased; and on that account it may be considered as more honorable to both.

original plan of representation. The ground on which the motion was opposed was this, that it may be wiser to submit to certain deviations and irregularities in an established form of government, rather than, by attempting to correct them, to hazard the safety of the whole fabric. A practice may indeed prevail, utterly indefensible in theory, and irreconcileable with the design of the framers of a political institution, and yet, from the changes, to which time subjects every community, may not be mischievous in its nature, and may even be productive of beneficial effects. It is, for instance, a principle of our house of commons, that its members should be chosen by the unbiassed votes of their constituents. But the fact is, that a considerable number of the members are chosen through the influence of persons, who from private connexions or various other causes happen to have weight with the voters; and that seats in parliament, to a certain extent, are obtained through pecuniary means, as was acknowledged without scruple in the debate upon Mr. Pitt's motion. This, it will be admitted on all hands, was never in the contemplation of our ancestors, but still no material harm seems likely to result from it, while confined to its present bounds, and perhaps upon the whole the good may preponderate. The two things chiefly to be desired in the house of commons are, that it should be open, first, to persons of extensive property of every species, who from their large stake in the country will be most studious to consult and provide for its real interests: and secondly, to men, who by possessing superior talents will be best able to promote the welfare, and raise the glory, of the nation. Members of the former description, who have been truly

CHAP. I. 1782.

independent, and of the latter, who have been highly distinguished, have been introduced into parliament, by means of what are called close and rotten boroughs, among whom may be reckoned lord Chatham, lord North, Mr. Fox, and Mr. Pitt. View the question in another light: it is the duty of the house of commons, both to direct the concerns of the kingdom at large, and to watch over and protect the particular interests of all those various classes of persons, of which the community consists; and the present diversity of the elective franchise affords an opportunity to men of all the liberal professions and respectable situations in life to become members of the house of commons; men of landed property, monied men, merchants, bankers, officers in the army and navy, lawyers, civilians, diplomatists, and those who from consciousness of ability are ambitious to serve their king and country in some political department. Hence, not only every order in society has its guardians in the great council of the nation to prevent any partially oppressive or injurious measure, but the house of commons has among its members persons, who can, from their own knowledge and experience, give information upon any point under deliberation, and suggest proposals upon subjects to which they have directed their attention, and in which the public good may be concerned. This great variety of characters in the members, is of itself attended with important advantages; and were they entirely or principally chosen from any single description of men, the worst consequences must inevitably ensue. Whatever defects, therefore, there may be in the present system of representation, and however short it may fall of ideal perfection, it seems no wonder, that the

house of commons as now elected should have been considered well calculated for all the practical purposes of one branch of a free government; and that it should have been decided, that there was no benefit in view sufficient to justify the risque, which must have been incurred by any alteration.

On the 17th of May, Mr. Pitt supported a motion of Mr. Sawbridge, for leave to bring in a bill to shorten the duration of parliaments, upon the ground, that long parliaments were one source of undue influence. Mr. Fox also supported the motion, but it was lost by a majority of 149 to 61.

After the new ministers came into office, there were several debates, relative to the state of Ireland, and on the 11th of June Mr. Fox introduced a bill for repealing the 6 Geo. 1. The object of this bill was, to renounce, on the part of this country, all legislative and judicial authority over Ireland; and it passed without any division in either house. Mr. Pitt approved the measure, but took no part in any of these debates on the subject of Ireland.

On the 19th of June, Mr. Pitt warmly and ably supported a bill introduced by lord Mahon, for preventing bribery and expence at the election of members to serve in parliament, in opposition to Mr. Powys and Mr. Baker, two county members, with whom at this time he generally acted. It astonished him, he said, to hear gentlemen avow hostility to the principle of a bill, which in his opinion was highly constitutional. It had been called an innovation. It was no innovation. It referred

CHAP. I. 1782.

merely to the mode of conducting a very constitutional business, a mode which had continually varied with the times, a mode which had admitted of the greatest abuses. The regulation of this was no innovation, but a restoration of the constitution. There was, indeed, nothing in the bill, which did not meet his fullest approbation. It was calculated to revive a number of very useful laws, which, from the relaxation of morals, had become almost obsolete. He went through a vast variety of topics, with such a masterly conception of the subject, with so much readiness and precision, and with a dignity and correctness of language so singular and so animated, that the house was most powerfully impressed. He was answered by Mr. Fox, who, after highly complimenting the preceding speaker, combated all his arguments with his usual ability and address. He denied that the principles of the bill had been fairly stated by his honorable friend (Mr. Pitt.) This point he labored with infinite dexterity and spirit. He wished by no means to countenance a bill, which carried on the face of it a sort of discordance, or at least a dissimilarity of sentiment, between candidates and voters. He was for cultivating the connexion between the elector and the elected, by all possible expedients. Why should the house endeavor to circumscribe the very few privileges the electors of Britain retained? Was it not rather their business to give them every assistance for extending their franchises? And nothing could possibly enhance the natural independence of English electors more than the power, upon an occasion of elections, of obliging their friends, or preferring to the highest honor of the country

those, who, in their opinion, might seem most deserving of it. He was not fond of recurring to those times, when representatives were paid for their trouble by those they represented. This house was then of little or no weight in the government of the country*. And those arguments, which referred to such antient usages, could be of no other use than to put the house of commons in mind of its antient insignificance. He said, that nothing, which would injure the cause of popularity, had any thing to expect from his support; and whenever the honorable gentleman came forward with his ideas of a more equal representation, he might depend on his warmest concurrence. This was a point on which they could never disagree. On the present bill, however, their opinions did not meet, and he had stated with great deference the grounds on which they differed. Mr. Pitt said, some explanation was necessary, and he was ready to give it: no one was more willing than he was, to give the right honorable gentleman all the credit which his very extraordinary abilities demanded. He joined very sincerely in the just applause, which a variety of shining and splendid passages in his speech naturally extorted from the whole house: he was even more sincere in approving those passages, because instead of reprobating, they actually made for, the question before the house. The forms of parliament did not permit him, and he had no inclination, to follow the right honorable gentleman through

* It would be well if those, who complain of the present state of the house of commons, and urge the necessity of restoring it to its original condition, would recollect these observations of Mr. Fox, which are unquestionably founded in truth and fact.

CHAP. I. 1782. all the extraneous topics he had introduced into the debate. He (Mr. Fox) had stigmatized those times of simplicity and purity, which had been mentioned, rather hastily, by ascribing to the insignificance of the house of commons, circumstances, which might arise from very different causes. He wished much, that all those virtues, which constitute the highest character of a country gentleman in this kingdom, had their fullest influence; but under that idea, said he, let us not introduce, let us not patronize, let us not plead for, licentiousness. To the qualities of generosity, of humanity, and of hospitality, he would give every possible degree of credit; but never, under that sacred pretence, would connive at the madness and tumult, which had rendered the elections in this country, for the most part, a mere farce. He returned thanks to the house for indulging him thus far, and said, that nothing but the warm interest he felt in a very important question could have induced him to take this liberty.

I have transcribed these short speeches, as I find them in the parliamentary debates, that it might be seen in what manner Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox spoke of each other, when arguing upon a question, concerning which they happened to differ (the first, I believe, upon which they did differ,) before any separation or material disagreement took place between them. I must, however, remark, that although they had hitherto acted together in parliament, there had been no intimacy or confidential intercourse between them. Mr. Pitt prevailed upon this occasion by a majority of one, the numbers being 60 and 59; but two days afterwards, when the bill was

re-committed, an important clause*, which was supported by Mr. Pitt and opposed by Mr. Fox, being rejected by a majority of 26†, the bill was withdrawn.

On the 25th of June, the attorney general‡, after moving resolutions, requiring Mr. Rigby late paymaster of the forces, and Mr. Ellis late treasurer of the navy, to lay before the house an account of the sums of money in their hands at the time of their quitting their respective offices§, which passed without a division, moved for "leave to bring in a bill to direct the payment into the exchequer, of the respective balances remaining in the hands of Mr. Rigby, and Mr. Ellis, for the use and benefit of the public:" this motion, supported by Mr. Fox and Mr. Pitt, both of whom spoke in the debate, and opposed by lord North, was rejected by a majority of 11, the numbers being 116 and 127: this division, which left the new ministers in a minority, was a proof of the strength of the late administration in the house of commons, upon any question in which they or their friends were personally concerned, after they had been two months out of office.

Although the present ministers, while in opposition, had concurred in censuring and resisting the measures of lord

* The clause was of a penal nature, relating to the disqualification of the candidate in a certain case.

† The numbers were 66 and 40.

‡ Sir Lloyd Kenyon, afterwards lord Kenyon, and successively master of the rolls, and chief justice of the king's bench.

§ The attorney general also proposed a resolution to make Mr. Rigby and Mr. Ellis accountable for the interest of the balances in their hands, but this idea being generally disapproved, the resolution was withdrawn.

North, yet when they became members of the same cabinet, jealousies soon arose; and so little cordiality and confidence prevailed among them, that even if lord Rockingham had lived, a new arrangement must have taken place. Lord Rockingham died on the 1st of July; and his majesty was pleased to appoint lord Shelburne to succeed him as first lord of the treasury. Mr. Fox and lord John Cavendish immediately resigned their offices*; and a few days afterwards, Mr. Fox stated in the house of commons, that the cause of his resignation was a difference of opinion upon some essential points between him and those who remained in his majesty's councils. General Conway, commander in chief, after insinuating that disappointment in a contest for power was the real cause of Mr. Fox's resignation, positively declared, that in his judgment there was no disagreement in the cabinet sufficient to justify Mr. Fox in withdrawing himself from it; that he saw no symptom of a departure from those principles, upon which the ministers had originally come into office; and that he was convinced lord Shelburne would steadily adhere to the system of his predecessor. This declaration from one of the ministers, made it necessary for Mr. Fox to rise again; and entering into a more full explanation, he acknowledged, that the appointment of lord Shelburne to the office of first ord of the treasury, was one reason which had induced him to retire. He proceeded to express his decided opinion, that the duke of Portland ought to have been placed in that situation,

* Lord Shelburne, in lamenting the resignation of these two members of the cabinet, said, that he admired the one for his great abilities, and venerated the other for his incorruptible integrity.

being the fittest person to succeed lord Rockingham as head of that great body of whigs, who had long acted together, and who had the best claim to the direction of public affairs. But while he thus seemed to dictate to the king, he admitted his majesty's indisputable right to nominate his own minister.

The above assertion of general Conway, and Mr. Fox's avowal of his objection to lord Shelburne's being at the head of the treasury, gave Mr. Pitt an opportunity of animadverting upon Mr. Fox's conduct. He ascribed his resignation to a dislike of men, and not of measures; to private pique, and not to public grounds; and he contended, that Mr. Fox, instead of making a separation among those, upon whose union the salvation of the country might depend, ought at least to have remained in office, till he had seen lord Shelburne abandoning the principles, upon which he and Mr. Fox and his friend lord Rockingham had hitherto acted, not only in opposing lord North's administration, but as colleagues in office and members of the same cabinet.

The fact was, that for the last three years Mr. Fox had been closely united with the Rockingham party, many of whom were persons of high rank, large property, and unexceptionable private character, and consequently of considerable weight in the country. To this party Mr. Fox was a material accession; and by connecting himself with such a powerful set of men, he added greatly to his own importance. The ability of the individual, and the respectability of the party, were mutually advantageous; and Mr. Fox might now with reason expect to be the real, though not the nominal, head of

CHAP. I. 1782.

that "great body of whigs," whom he had pronounced to have the best claim to the direction of public affairs, and who had long been in the habit of treating lord Rockingham with great deference, to which, from his unimpeached honor, political experience, and the high situation* which he had filled, he was justly entitled.

Lord Shelburne having been promoted to the head of the treasury, and Mr. Fox and lord John Cavendish having resigned their respective situations, Mr. Thomas Townshend and lord Grantham were made secretaries of state, and Mr. Pitt chancellor of the exchequer. Thus did Mr. Pitt, when he was little more than 23 years old, attain the important office of finance minister in the house of commons, where all measures relative to the revenue must originate; and at a time when the pecuniary concerns of the country were known to be in a state of the greatest embarrassment, in consequence of a long and expensive war, which still continued. He did not, like other eminent statesmen, who began their political career in the house of commons, previously pass through some subordinate office†; nor did he wait till that period of life, which had hitherto been considered as necessary to mature the judgment, and to qualify even men of the most brilliant talents for the higher departments of

* He was first lord of the treasury from July 1765 to August 1766.

† This was the case with lord Godolphin, lord Oxford, lord Bolingbroke, sir Robert Walpole, Mr. Pelham, lord Chatham, lord North, and Mr. Fox, who may be considered as the most eminent statesmen since the revolution. The only office indeed which lord Oxford held before he was made secretary of state, at the age of 43, was that of speaker of the house of commons

executive government. He was, at once, at this early age, placed in a situation, which before had always been filled by persons of tried discretion, and long established character, and which, from peculiar circumstances, was now attended with greater difficulties, than had been encountered by any of his predecessors.

CHAPTER THE SECOND:

1782.

Prorogation of Parliament — Negotiations for Peace — Meeting of Parliament — Preliminary Articles of Peace — Debates upon them in the House of Commons — Mr. Pitt resigns — Coalition Administration.

CHAP. II. 1782.

IMMEDIATELY after Mr. Pitt was appointed chancellor of the exchequer, he left Lincoln's Inn, and having taken possession of his official house in Downing-street, from that moment devoted his whole time and thoughts to the service of his country. Besides a strict attention to the duties of his peculiar office, he omitted no opportunity of becoming acquainted with the business of every department of the state; and by his penetration and diligence he soon acquired a variety of useful information, both as to foreign and domestic politics. The connexion which had subsisted between lord Shelburne and lord Chatham, in the latter part of lord Chatham's life, naturally led to a considerable degree of confidence between lord Shelburne and Mr. Pitt, different as their characters were in some important points; and there was perhaps at this time no person in the kingdom, from whose knowledge and experience Mr. Pitt would have derived greater advantage.

Parliament was prorogued on the 11th of July, and Mr. Pitt continued in London and its neighborhood, the whole of the summer. His time, when he was not detained in town by

business, was passed principally with private friends, at his late father's house at Hayes, which still remained in the family.

Towards the end of autumn, after an impartial estimate of the support, which government, in the present state of parties, might expect to receive in the house of commons, it appeared to ministers very desirable, that some additional strength should, if possible, be obtained before the meeting of parliament. Mr. Pitt, however, positively objected to any application being made to lord North. He had resolved, from a sense of public duty, not to enter into any political connexion with a man, whose administration had brought so much disgrace and calamity upon the country, and whose principles he had so repeatedly and severely condemned. This determination proceeded from no personal dislike to lord North, with whom he had never had any acquaintance or intercourse; but from a conviction, that a change from that system, which had been so long pursued, was indispensably necessary to rescue the kingdom from the dangers with which it was surrounded. But neither Mr. Pitt nor lord Shelburne saw any reason, why they should not act with Mr. Fox. It was therefore agreed, that an offer should be made to him to return to office, for which purpose Mr. Pitt waited upon him by appointment. As soon as Mr. Fox heard the object of Mr. Pitt's visit, he asked, whether it was intended that lord Shelburne should remain first lord of the treasury, to which Mr. Pitt answered in the affirmative. Mr. Fox immediately replied, that it was impossible for him to belong to any administration, of which lord Shelburne was the head. Mr. Pitt observed, that if that was his determination, it would be useless for him to enter into any farther discussion,

CHAP. II. 1782.

"as he did not come to betray lord Shelburne;" and he took his leave. This was, I believe, the last time Mr. Pitt was in a private room with Mr. Fox; and from this period may be dated that political hostility, which continued through the remainder of their lives.

Mr. Fox, while in opposition, had repeatedly asserted, that peace might be easily obtained by any minister, except lord North; and as soon as he was appointed secretary of state, he made application to the States General, through the Russian minister at the Hague, to induce them to consent to a separate peace; but this proposal was rejected with disdain. He then sent Mr. Thomas Grenville to Paris, to open a negotiation for a general peace, but scarcely any steps were taken in this important business, when Mr. Fox resigned the seals. Mr. Grenville was, at his own desire, immediately recalled; and lord Shelburne renewed the attempt, through Mr. Fitzherbert*, with France, Spain, and Holland; and through Mr. Oswald, with America The result was, that, at the meeting of parliament, on the 5th of December, the king, in his speech from the throne, announced, that provisional articles of peace with the American colonies were actually agreed upon, to take effect whenever terms of peace should be finally settled with the court of France; and that negotiations for peace with all the belligerent powers of Europe, were so considerably advanced, as to afford reason to hope and believe, that they would soon be brought to a favorable conclusion. The motion for an address to his majesty, thanking him for his speech from the throne, and expressing satisfaction

* Afterwards lord St. Helen's.

at the progress made for a general pacification, was carried unanimously in both houses.

When the address was reported to the house of commons, on the following day, Mr. Burke exerted all his great powers of wit and eloquence, to turn the king's speech into ridicule; commenting upon many of its expressions in a vein of sarcastic humor, which kept the house for some time in constant laughter. He accused lord Shelburne of "duplicity and delusion;" but of Mr. Pitt's "virtue, integrity, and honor," he repeatedly spoke in terms of the highest commendation. Mr. Pitt reproved the levity of this veteran orator, in a grave and dignified strain, which at once marked his readiness at reply, and his correct sense of propriety and decorum. He said, that the present was a moment for seriousness, and not for mirth. The gay flowers of a brilliant and exuberant fancy were proper for their season—the hours of recreation and conviviality. He should be happy to share in the delights of that fertile imagination, which had so long been the wonder and the pleasure of the house; but he could not indulge himself in admiring "the beautiful motes which people the sunbeam," when his mind was occupied with objects so serious and important as those then before the house; nor could he do otherwise than condemn the indiscretion of that wit, which so unseasonably ran away with the good sense and sober judgment of the honorable gentleman. It was only in circles of amusement that it became men to give a loose to their imagination, and abstract their minds from all business and reflexion. He rose, therefore, to bring back the house to sobriety and seriousness; and to tell them, that this was neither a fit time, nor the present a proper subject, for the

CHAP. II. 1782.

exhibition of a gaudy fancy, or the wanton blandishments of theatrical enchantment: it was their duty to break the magician's wand, to dispel the cloud, beautiful as it was, which had been thrown over their heads, and to consider solemnly and gravely the very perilous situation of the country; and by the force of their united wisdom, abilities, and experience, endeavor to extricate the nation from its difficulties, by the restoration of an honorable peace. The honorable gentleman had paid him many compliments, which he was sorry he could neither accept, nor thank him for, as they were accompanied with animadversions of such a nature, that only the elegance of the honorable gentleman's genius could save them from being ridiculous. All such playful exercises of the honorable gentleman's talent for the gay and ludicrous, he should treat with neglect; and all compliments paid to him in such a style, he should never think himself bound to acknowledge. That the honorable gentleman's character of the speech from the throne, would be admitted by the house, he could not believe; because he could not believe, that they would consent to call that speech "a farrago of hypocrisies and absurdities," which they had unanimously approved, and for which they had, without a single dissentient voice, agreed to present his majesty with an address of thanks. That his majesty's serious admonitions to his parliament should be branded with such epithets; that his feelings on so affecting a subject as the dismemberment of his empire, should be outraged; that his speech, delivered with all the sacredness of royalty, should be charged with mockery, hypocrisy, and even profaneness, were things which he did not expect to hear; and which nothing could excuse, but the

circumstance of their being the overflowings of a mind, the richness of whose wit was unchecked for the time by its wisdom. Mr. Pitt then made some observations upon the few arguments which Mr. Burke had advanced; and concluded by saying, "the serious part of what has fallen from the honorable gentleman, I consider as illogical and unfounded; the trifling part, as the redundancy of an over-luxuriant imagination, which, in the hour of cool reflexion, the honorable gentleman, I am convinced, will confess to have been ill-timed and improper*."

The report of the address was received without any division.

The king having, in his speech from the throne, acquainted parliament, that he had offered in the treaty of peace to declare the American colonies free and independent states, which he found to be indispensable to the attainment of an entire and cordial reconciliation, the duke of Richmond, in the debate upon the address in the house of lords, asserted, that the independence of the American states was now fully and irrevocably recognized by this country, whatever might be the result of the present negotiation with France. But, on the other hand, lord Shelburne maintained, that the recognition of the independence of America was contingent upon peace with France, and that the provisional articles would have no effect, if that event should not take place. This difference of opinion was noticed on the following day, in the house of commons, by Mr. Fox, who took occasion from it to ask ministers, whether the provisional treaty recognized the

* I was present when this speech was delivered, and nothing could exceed the applause with which it was received by the house.

independence of America unconditionally, so that if the negotiation then carrying forward for a general peace should not be brought to a speedy determination, the provisional articles would still remain in force; and whenever we should have a peace with the European powers, that agreement would be finally ratified? To this question, Mr. Townshend, Mr. Pitt, and general Conway, the only three ministers in the house of commons, concurred in answering, that the clear indisputable meaning of the provisional agreement made with the American commissioners, was, the unconditional, unqualified recognition of the independence of the colonies. This subject was renewed in several subsequent debates, and gave rise to some severe animadversions upon lord Shelburne, who was represented as having delivered sentiments inconsistent with those of his colleagues, and as intending to deceive both them and the public.

On the 11th of December, the day fixed for voting the army estimates, Mr. Burke compared his majesty's ministers, in thus holding a double language, to the serpent which naturalists describe to have two heads; and he desired to be informed upon which of the many opinions, entertained in the country respecting American independence, the provisional articles were built. Mr. Pitt, conformably to what he had said upon the former occasion, assured him, that the provisional articles acknowledged the independence of America substantially and conclusively; and that the recognition could not be revoked, even if the present treaty with the European powers should not succeed. The debate was continued, and in the course of it, Mr. Courtenay said, that gentlemen had

taken notice of the contradictory language of his majesty's ministers, and had expressed their apprehensions, that from the assertion of a noble lord in another house, there was delusion in the provisional agreement. For his part, this contrariety of sentiment and explanation only furnished him with a new proof of the talents of the noble lord in question, who was exceedingly well skilled and adroit in the dissemination of discordant opinions, for the sake of unanimity. As two negatives produce in rhetoric an affirmative, the noble lord in his casuistical policy knew, that two opinions, of an exactly contrary tendency, were likely to convince men of different principles, and to bring them over to his way of thinking. For instance, there was one set of men, who thought, we should not grant independence to America, without a compensation, such as procuring a general peace. To these men, therefore, the noble lord declared, that the provisional articles contained only an offer of independence, which might be recalled in certain circumstances; and by this explanation he brought over all such men to his side. There was another set of men, who thought, that it would be magnanimous and good policy in this nation, to acknowledge the independence of America, in the first instance, absolutely and irrevocably: to meet the ideas of these men, the noble lord's colleagues in this house came forward and declared, that the provisional agreement did this fully and finally; and these gentlemen were also brought over. "This," said Mr. Courtenay, "is what I call disseminating contradictory opinions for the sake of unanimity. I have, however, and so indeed has every man, an implicit confidence in the chancellor of the exchequer. The

CHAP. II. 1782.

explanation which he has given of the provisional articles, will certainly have its proper weight in the house; and the noble earl, of whom I have spoken, has unquestionably shewn his genius and judgment in procuring the aid of the right honorable gentleman in his administration. He has placed him in the cabinet, for the wisest of purposes. There is a kind of magic in the name and lineage of a Pitt, which the earl of Shelburne knew must have its influence in the nation. The noble earl is a great philosopher, and he has been taught, probably by Dr. Priestley, that the best method of purifying foul and corrupted air is by the introduction of a young vegetable; and he no doubt knows, from experiment, that an exhausted animal will live much longer, and a candle burn brighter, in dephlogisticated air, than in any other." In a subsequent part of the same debate, Mr. Fox observed, that the ingenious opinion advanced by Mr. Courtenay, was exceedingly expressive of lord Shelburne's character. It was very true, that he acted so much in a style of duplicity and art, that his language would bear any construction, which either he or his friends might choose to put upon it. He believed, that no man knew better how to accommodate himself to the opinions of mankind, or how to frame his measures, so that they might look every possible way, and bear every possible explanation. It was, therefore, very evident and clear to him, that if lord Shelburne could, in the first instance, cajole his colleagues in office to consent to the provisional agreement, under the persuasion, that they thought it was a complete and irrevocable recognition of the independence of America, he would concede every thing to bring over those

gentlemen to his purpose; and having succeeded thus far, he would then accommodate himself to the temper of the other set of men, and by these discordant means be able to produce unanimity. He approved what had fallen from Mr. Powys, who had termed the ministers of that house hostages for the ratification of the provisional treaty, agreeably to their avowed construction of it. He would, he declared, be content, in the marked phraseology of his worthy and respectable friend, (sir George Savile,) to accept of personal security, that the construction put upon the provisional treaty should be enforced; and therefore he would follow the example of Mr. Powys, and consider the three right honorable gentlemen as hostages for the due performance of what they had solemnly declared was the true meaning of the treaty.

Mr. Fox, however, would not allow the matter to rest here: he contended that parliament ought to have an opportunity of forming their own judgment upon so important a point as the recognition of American independence; and therefore, on the 18th of December, he moved, "That an humble address be presented to his majesty, that he will be graciously pleased to give directions, that there be laid before this house, such parts of the provisional articles agreed upon between his majesty's commissioners and the commissioners of the United States of America, as relate to the recognition of the independency of the said states." This motion was resisted by the ministers, and also by lord North and his friends, and upon a division, it was rejected by 219 to 46.

There was no other material debate before the Christmas recess, but upon every occasion Mr. Fox and his party used their

CHAP. II
1782.

utmost endeavors, by insinuation and open attack, to lower the character of lord Shelburne. He was accused of duplicity and insincerity; and it was even asserted, that no credit was due to the declarations in his majesty's speech, which is always considered as the speech of the minister, relative to the independence of America, and the progress made towards a general pacification. These reflections and accusations, urged repeatedly and confidently, in all the variety and with all the art, which wit and ingenuity could suggest, and apparently supported by the different constructions put upon the provisional articles by his lordship and the other ministers, had certainly considerable effect both in and out of parliament, although it would have been difficult to point out any action in lord Shelburne's public life, which would have justified this suspicion and distrust. The conduct of the business of government in the house of commons, was nominally in the hands of Mr. secretary Townshend, but it was Mr. Pitt who took the prominent part in every debate; and though he had to contend with the experience and talents of Mr. Burke, Mr. Fox, and Mr. Sheridan, he was always prepared to repel their attacks, however unexpected, and to whatever point they were directed; never failing, even in this early period of his parliamentary career, to prove himself more than equal to the most powerful of his opponents.

THOUGH the repeal of the 6 Geo. 1, in the last session, was intended and considered as a renunciation of all legislative and judicial authority in Great Britain over Ireland, yet the English court of king's bench thought it incumbent upon them to decide an Irish cause of appeal, which had been previously

depending in that court. The conduct of the king's bench in proceeding to this decision, was universally approved in England; but in Ireland it excited so much jealousy and dissatisfaction, that ministers judged it expedient, immediately after the Christmas recess, to bring a bill into the English house of commons, expressly enacting, that the people of Ireland should in future be bound only by laws passed in the parliament of that kingdom; and that no writ of error or appeal should hereafter be received from the courts of law or equity in Ireland by the courts in England. There was no division upon this bill in any of its stages, in either house of parliament.

THE preliminary articles of peace with France and Spain were signed at Paris, on the 20th of January 1783; and on the 27th, copies of them and of the provisional articles with America, were laid before both houses of parliament. Mr. secretary Townshend had previously informed the house of commons, that no preliminary articles between this country and the United States of Holland, were at present signed, but that a cessation of hostilities had been agreed upon.

IT was thought right to allow time for examining the terms of the several treaties, before they were discussed in parliament; and in this interval, Mr. Pitt brought another subject under the consideration of the house of commons. From his first entrance into parliament, he had professed himself a friend to economical reform; and since he had been chancellor of the exchequer, he had diligently inquired into the constitution of the public offices, and the manner in which business was

CHAP. II. 1783.

transacted in them, with a view to diminish the expence of those establishments. Having found a great variety of circumstances in almost every department, which required correction, on the 10th of February, after a few introductory observations, he moved, first, "for leave to bring in a bill for preventing abuses, and establishing certain regulations, in the several offices of the treasury, admiralty, ordnance, excise, and stamps, and in several other offices to be therein mentioned." He then proceeded to say, that there was another office engaged in the collection of the public revenue, which he thought of sufficient magnitude to be considered in a separate bill; he meant the board of customs, where, from the want of proper power to check their increase, bad habits had grown into practice, and the fees of clerks and various persons employed, had been raised and multiplied in an arbitrary way, and to an exorbitant degree. Another point to which the bill would be applied, was, the annulling the patents, under which various places were held as mere sinecures, by persons, who were not under the control of the commissioners, and whose deputies were guilty of innumerable exactions and impositions. These patent places were fruitful only of abuse, neither facilitating the business of the office, nor contributing to the accommodation of the public; but, on the other hand, they operated in a manner very vexatious to the merchants, and detrimental to the revenue. He proposed to limit all fees, perquisites, and salaries, to certain definite sums, in every department of the custom-house; to abolish all useless patent offices, making a suitable compensation both to the present possessors, and to those who had an interest in any reversion; and to introduce regulations, and to give powers for simplifying the present

intricate forms of office, and for expediting the transaction of business in this important branch of the public revenue: he accordingly moved, secondly, for leave to bring in a bill for these purposes. To convince the house of the necessity for this bill, he moved, thirdly, for a list of all the established officers of the customs in England and Scotland, with their respective salaries. Fourthly, for an account of all the fees, perquisites, and salaries, received by patent officers of the customs in England and Scotland, together with the payments to their deputies, and any other charges to which they might be liable: and fifthly, for a similar account respecting officers who held their situations otherwise than by patent. Mr. Pitt was induced to extend his views to Scotland, on the suggestion of Mr. Dempster, who said, that there was as much reason in Scotland, as in England, to complain of the fees and perquisites paid to custom-house officers, and of the delays and inconveniences to which merchants and traders were subject. All these motions passed unanimously, and with strong marks of approbation.

As the time approached for discussing the treaties, it was obvious to every one, that the continuance of ministers in office must depend upon the opinion which parliament might express respecting the terms of the peace; and the general expectation was fixed upon the part, which the two great leaders, lord North and Mr. Fox, would take upon that question. Lord North was fully aware of Mr. Pitt's positive determination to have no political connexion with him; and he could not but know, that a perfectly good understanding subsisted between

CHAP. II. 1783.

lord Shelburne and Mr. Pitt: he must, therefore, have been convinced, that any union between himself and the present ministers, was utterly impracticable. Mr. Fox, on his part, had resolved, not to take office while lord Shelburne was first lord of the treasury. Under these circumstances, lord North and Mr. Fox had a common interest in the removal of ministers; and the present appeared a favorable opportunity for effecting that purpose. Their sentiments were sounded by means of common friends, through whose intervention they pledged themselves to each other, to oppose any motion which might be made for approving the terms of the peace. Nothing farther was settled between them at this time. Future measures were to depend upon the result of their first co-operation.

The 17th of February having been fixed for taking the treaties into consideration, Mr. Thomas Pitt* on that day moved, "That an humble address be presented to his majesty, to return his majesty the thanks of this house for his gracious condescension in ordering the preliminary and provisional articles of the several treaties, which his majesty had concluded, to be laid before them, and to assure his majesty, that they had considered them with that attention which so important a subject required: to express their satisfaction, that his majesty had, in consequence of the powers entrusted to him, laid the foundation, by the provisional articles with the states of North America, for a treaty of peace, which they trusted would ensure perfect reconciliation and friendship between both countries; and that in this confidence they presumed to express their just expectations, that the several states of North America would

* Afterwards lord Camelford.

carry into effectual and satisfactory execution those measures, which the congress was so solemnly bound by the treaty to recommend, in favor of such persons as had suffered for the part they had taken in the war, and that they should consider this circumstance as the surest indication of returning friendship: To acknowledge their due sense of that wise and paternal regard for the happiness of his subjects, which induced his majesty to deliver them from a burdensome and expensive war; and to assure his majesty, they shall encourage every exertion of his subjects of Great Britain and Ireland in the improvement of those resources, which shall tend to the augmentation of the public strength, and the prosperity of his dominions."

As soon as Mr. Wilberforce had seconded this motion, lord John Cavendish rose and stated, that although there appeared some grounds of objection to the terms of the peace, the house was not at present competent to decide, whether, upon the whole, they deserved approbation or disapprobation; especially, since the treaty with Holland was not yet concluded; and therefore, after urging the propriety of not hastily pronouncing an opinion upon so important a question, he moved, that the whole of the address, after the words in the first paragraph, "to assure his majesty that," should be omitted, and the following words be substituted, "his faithful commons will proceed to consider the same with that serious and full attention, which a subject of such importance to the present and future interests of his majesty's dominions deserves: that in the mean time they entertain the fullest confidence in his majesty's paternal care, that he will concert with his parliament

CHAP. II. 1783.

such measures as may be expedient for extending the commerce of his majesty's subjects: that whatever may be the sentiments of his faithful commons, on the investigation of the terms of pacification, they beg leave to assure his majesty of their firm and unalterable resolution to adhere inviolably to the several articles, for which the public faith is pledged, and to maintain the blessings of peace, so necessary to his majesty's subjects and the general happiness of mankind." Mr. St. John having seconded this amendment, lord North rose, and at the end of a long and able speech, in which he entered into a minute examination of the terms of peace, and the relative state of the different powers engaged in the late war, he declared his intention to vote for the amendment; but he desired leave to propose an addition to it, which circumstance affords strong reason to believe, that he had not been previously consulted concerning the precise motion to be made by lord John Cavendish. The addition proposed by lord North, related to the loyalists, and was this, "And his majesty's faithful commons feel, that it would be superfluous to express to his majesty the regards due from the nation to every description of men, who, with the risque of their lives and sacrifice of their properties, have distinguished their loyalty and fidelity, during a long and calamitous war:" These words, the substance of which was in the original address, were adopted, and inserted after the words "commerce of his majesty's subjects."

The nature of this amendment, as moved by lord John Cavendish, and added to by lord North, shewed, that those who aimed at the removal of ministers, did not venture to propose at once a direct censure of the treaties. They thought it

necessary to feel their way, and under color of desiring more time for consideration, they procured for themselves the means of collecting the sense of the house, and of forming an opinion, how far they might depend upon the support of their friends, without absolutely committing themselves upon either of the two grand points—a junction between the two parties, who had been so long and so acrimoniously opposed to each other—and a parliamentary condemnation of the conditions of peace. But although the amendment itself was cautiously worded, and the mover of it was himself very guarded in what he said, yet both lord North and Mr. Fox, in the debate which followed, argued at great length, in most decided language, against the terms of the treaties, which was perhaps necessary for the attainment of the object which they had in view. At the same time, however, that they might not alarm those, who were rejoicing that an end was put to the horrors and miseries of war, or give a shock to the public faith, which might be considered as pledged by the several provisional and preliminary articles, they unequivocally declared, as lord John Cavendish had also done, and as the amendment expressed, that they did not mean "in any particular to overthrow or frustrate the peace which had been concluded;" and it was remarked, that lord North and Mr. Fox, contrary to their custom for many years, studiously abstained from any reflection upon each other. In all this there was certainly great political management.

Mr. Pitt rose immediately after Mr. Fox, at four o'clock in the morning, and replied to the various arguments which had been advanced against the treaties; but both the house and

CHAP. II. 1783.

himself being nearly exhausted when he began, there were perhaps few occasions upon which he spoke with less effect. The division did not take place till half past seven, and the amendment was carried by a majority of 16, the numbers being 224 and 208. The address thus amended was voted unanimously, and was presented to the king on the 19th.

The division, and every thing which passed in the debate, were very encouraging to the opponents of government, and they now thought that they might safely come forward with a positive censure of the terms of the treaties. Accordingly, on the 21st of February, lord John Cavendish, after complaining, that those, who had voted for the amendment to the address, were considered as enemies to peace, and assuring the house, that neither he, nor his friends, had the remotest intention to annul or shake those treaties, which had been made by the king's prerogative, moved the five following resolutions:

First, that in consideration of the public faith, which ought to be preserved inviolable, this house will support his majesty, in rendering firm and permanent the peace to be concluded definitively, in consequence of the provisional treaty and preliminary articles, which have been laid before the house.

Secondly, that this house will, in concurrence with his majesty's paternal regard for his people, employ its best endeavors to improve the blessings of peace to the advantage of his crown and subjects.

Thirdly, that his majesty, in acknowledging the independence of the United States of America, by virtue of the powers vested in him by the act of the last session of parliament, to enable his majesty to conclude a peace or truce with certain colonies

in North America, has acted as the circumstances of affairs indispensably required, and in conformity to the sense of parliament.

Fourthly, that the concessions made to the adversaries of Great Britain, by the said provisional treaty and preliminary articles, are greater than they were entitled to, either from the actual situation of their respective possessions, or from their comparative strength.

Fifthly, that this house do feel the regard due from this nation to every description of men, who, with the risque of their lives, and the sacrifice of their property, have distinguished their loyalty, and been conspicuous for their fidelity, during a long and calamitous war; and do assure his majesty that they shall take every proper method to relieve them, which the state of the circumstances of this country will permit.

To the first three resolutions very little objection was made, and they passed unanimously. But upon the fourth, there was a long and animated debate, which was begun by Mr. Powys*, at that time an independent member of great weight in the house of commons, who declared, that it was with the most painful feelings that he rose to oppose a motion made by the noble lord, whose candor he had long admired, and whose principles he had been accustomed to revere. He had expected, after what had been assigned by the other side of the house, as the ground of the amendment moved to the address, a few days since, that a motion would have been that day made, for the house to resolve itself into a committee, in order to take the provisional and preliminary articles into their serious

* Afterwards lord Lilford.

CHAP. II. 1783. consideration, and that those treaties would have been discussed and investigated article by article. Such a motion appeared to him, to be a natural consequence of what had been said last Monday; but to deny then that the articles had been sufficiently considered, and to call upon the house now, without any farther consideration, to vote a censure upon the peace, appeared to him perfectly irreconcileable either with reason or common sense. How came the house to be that day more ripe to declare an opinion on the peace, than they had been last Monday? How had they spent the three intervening days? Had that time been dedicated to an examination and discussion of the articles? Every gentleman knew, that it had not been so employed. How then was the house to proceed to a vote of censure? What, without papers and without sufficient information upon the subject, to enable them to form a judgment upon the whole of the treaties? He trusted, that the house would act more prudently, and reject the motion; of this he was certain—the noble lord in the blue ribbon could not vote for it. The noble lord had expressly declared in his speech on Monday last, that he would not vote a censure upon ministers. For consistency's sake, therefore, the noble lord could not vote for the present question; and as his friends stuck pretty close to him, he trusted that the motion would not be carried.

With regard to the peace, he said, he had already declared, that there were parts of it, which he had wished not to see in the treaties; but that, nevertheless, such was the situation of the country, such the state of our finances, and such the power of the confederacy formed against us, that he was ready to

accept the peace as it was, and to say, that it merited the approbation of parliament. How an honorable gentleman over the way (Mr. Fox,) could say otherwise, he was at a loss to imagine. That honorable gentleman, the house would recollect, had talked of the necessity of a peace, in strong terms, some time ago; and when he afterwards came into power, and had from that circumstance the fullest opportunity of information, he had told the house, that bad as he had formerly described our situation to be, he had found things much worse than he had painted them, and that almost any peace was desirable. How that honorable gentleman would act that day, he as yet knew not; but he should be a good deal surprized, if he were to stand up and support the motion. The plain meaning of the question was, in his opinion, not, whether the peace deserved praise or censure, but to remove the present administration. He wished, that foreign courts understood the matter as well as they did within those walls—then the question would do no great harm. As to any idea, that the peace had been hurried on merely to keep ministers in power, he could say nothing of ministers collectively, because he knew them not collectively; but there were some in office, of whose honor and integrity he was so well convinced, that he was persuaded they would spurn at such an idea, and hold it in as much contempt, as his noble friend himself who made the motion. As to the first lord of the treasury, if his removal was the principal object of the motion, he took that matter to be pretty well decided already. The division on Monday last, was a broad hint to that lord, that he was not altogether so popular as he had imagined. He cautioned

CHAP. II. 1783. the house, therefore, against being drawn in to adopt a motion, which might prove of the most pernicious consequence to their country. Perhaps what had passed on Monday last might do much harm abroad, and stop France from disarming. In that case, instead of peace, we should see our late enemies observing an armed neutrality, and should be under the necessity of keeping up all our war establishments, by which means the nation would still groan under that immense burden of expence, to relieve us from which, a peace was so much to be desired. If the peace was bad, let the house look at the cause of it. The noble lord in the blue ribbon, by his mal-administration of affairs, had plunged us into the war, and brought on all those calamities which now obliged us to accept the peace, such as it was. To the ill-timed lenity of the present ministry it was owing, that the noble lord enjoyed his present situation*. Had those inquiries, which had once been talked of, been carried on, he was persuaded they would not, on Monday last, or that day, have witnessed the very extraordinary and unnatural coalition and alliance, which had been formed against ministers. Last summer, he said, he had observed something like sterling principle in party: he wished that principle to remain pure and incorrupt; and he advised his noble friend who made the motion to recollect, that though some alloy might be necessary to make the political coin sufficiently durable for currency, yet that care should be taken not to debase it entirely.

In the course of the debate Mr. Fox made a long and elaborate speech, in which he maintained, that a vote of disapprobation of the terms of the provisional treaty and

* That is, that he had not been impeached.

preliminary articles, could not be considered by our late enemies as indicating any wish to renew the war. "France, Spain, and America," he said, "must believe, that we are determined indeed for peace, when we can so solemnly pledge ourselves, as we do by the first resolution, to ratify and confirm a negotiation, in which we find such a waste of our interests and possessions." He would not allow, that this fourth resolution was brought forward as a mere contest for power; but insisted, that it was incumbent upon the house, to declare their opinion upon the peace, for which the papers already upon the table were fully sufficient. He entered into an examination of the conditions of the treaties, and pronounced them to be inconsiderate, improvident, and inadequate to the real and relative situation of the kingdom. He affirmed, that our navy was in a respectable state, when compared with that of our enemies; and that their finances were as much exhausted as our own, France and Spain being in as much danger of a public bankruptcy as England was. He lamented that his coalition with lord North had lost him the support, and brought down upon him the censure, of some persons, for whom he had great respect; and asserted, that this junction of parties was rendered necessary by the political circumstances of the country. He had, indeed, as was well known, formerly opposed the measures of lord North; but now all ground of disagreement was removed by the declaration of American independence: private resentments ought not to be remembered, when the public interest required unanimity. He avowed his wish to be in office, trusting that the short time he was in administration, he had not shewn

CHAP. II. 1783.

any incompetency, which should prevent his offering himself a candidate for a share in that new arrangement, which was become indispensable, in consequence of the late neglectful, not to give it a worse epithet, conduct of the first lord of the treasury. He imputed the whole blame of the peace to lord Shelburne; and represented him as acting upon unconstitutional principles, and as having made disgraceful concessions in the treaties, for the purpose of keeping himself in power.

Mr. Pitt began his reply, by noticing the unbecoming language of triumph used by Mr. Fox on that day, and by assuring the house, that no party motives should ever seduce him to any inconsistency, which the busiest suspicion should presume to glance at. He would never engage in political enmities without a public cause—he would never forego such enmities without the public approbation—nor would he be questioned and cast off in the face of that house, by one virtuous and dissatisfied friend. These the sober and durable triumphs of reason over the weak and profligate inconsistencies of party violence, these the steady triumphs of virtue over success itself, should not only be his in his present situation, but through every future condition of his life; triumphs, which no length of time should diminish, which no change of principles should ever sully.

He then detailed at great length the situation of this country with respect to its army, its navy, and its finances; and on the other hand stated the military and naval strength of our numerous enemies, with an allusion to Mr. Fox's humiliating and unsuccessful proposal to Holland on the subject of peace,

when he was secretary of state. In speaking of the deficiency of our revenue, he exclaimed, in reference to Mr. Fox's assertion, that other nations were in equal distress, "Good God! to what consequences does the honorable gentleman lead us? Should I have ventured to advise the continuance of war, at the risque of a public bankruptcy, which would almost have dissolved the bonds of government, and have involved the state in the confusion of a general ruin? Should I have ventured to do this, because one of the adverse powers might have experienced the same calamity?" He also inquired into the terms of the different treaties, and enumerated what had been respectively ceded, and what retained, by the contracting parties, in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America: from these considerations he drew two conclusions—that it was impossible for this kingdom to have continued the war; and that the peace, all circumstances taken into the account, was such as called for the approbation of parliament. There was indeed, he said, a time, when Great Britain might have met her enemies on other conditions; and if an imagination, warmed with the power and glory of this country, could have diverted any member of his majesty's councils from a painful inspection of the truth, he might, he hoped, without presumption, have been entitled to that indulgence. He felt at that instant, how much he had been animated in his childhood by a recital of England's victories. He was taught by one, whose memory he should ever revere *, that at the close of a war, far different indeed from this, she might have dictated the terms of peace to submissive nations. This, in which he placed something more

* The earl of Chatham.

than a common interest, was the memorable æra of England's glory. But that æra was past: she was now under the awful and mortifying necessity of employing a language corresponding with her new condition. The visions of her power and pre-eminence were passed away.

"These," continued Mr. Pitt, "are the conditions, to which this country, engaged with four powerful states, and exhausted in all her resources, has thought fit to subscribe, for the dissolution of that confederacy, and the immediate enjoyment of peace. Let us look to what is left, with a manly and determined courage. Let us strengthen ourselves against inveterate enemies, and re-conciliate our antient friends. The misfortunes of kingdoms, as well as of individuals, which are laid open and examined with true wisdom, are more than half redressed; and to this great object should be directed all the virtue and all the abilities of this house.—Let us feel our calamities: let us bear them like men.

"But, I fear, I have too long engaged your attention to no real purpose, and that the national security will this day be risqued, without a blush, by the malice and disappointment of faction. The honorable gentleman (Mr. Fox) has, in fact, declared, that because he was prevented from prosecuting the noble lord in the blue ribbon, to the satisfaction of public justice, he will heartily embrace him as his friend. So readily does he reconcile extremes, and love the man whom he wished to impeach—with the same spirit, I suppose, he will cherish the peace, because he abhors it. But I will not hesitate to assert, from the evident complexion of this night's debate, that the opposition to the treaties originates, rather in

a desire to force the earl of Shelburne from the treasury, than in any real conviction, that ministers deserve censure for the concessions they have made: concessions, which, from the facts I have enumerated, and the reasoning I have employed as arising from those facts, are the obvious result of an absolute necessity, and imputable not so much to those of whom the present cabinet is composed, as to that cabinet of which the noble lord in the blue ribbon was a member.".

In adverting to the supposed coalition between lord North and Mr. Fox, he said, " If, however, the baneful alliance is not already formed, if this ill-omened marriage is not already solemnized, I know a just and lawful impediment, and in the name of the public safety, I here forbid the banns."

After vindicating lord Shelburne from the aspersions of those, who " thought his elevation effected at their own expence," and bearing honorable testimony to his abilities and zeal in the service of his country, he proceeded in this manner, " My own share in the censure, pointed, by the motion before the house, against his majesty's ministers, I will bear with fortitude, because my heart tells me, I have not acted wrongly. To this monitor, who never did, and I trust never will, deceive me, I will confidently repair, as to an adequate asylum from all the clamor, which interested faction can raise. I was not very eager to come into office, and shall have no great reluctance to go out, whenever I shall be dismissed from the service of the public. It has been the grand object of my short official existence, to do the duties of my station with all the ability and address in my power, and with a fidelity and honor, which should bear me up, and give me confidence, under every

possible contingency and disappointment. I can say with sincerity, I never had a wish, which did not terminate in the dearest interests of the nation. I will, at the same time, imitate the honorable gentleman's candor, and confess, that I too have my ambition. High situations and great influence are desirable objects to most men; and objects which I am not ashamed to pursue, which I am even solicitous to possess, whenever they can be acquired with honor and retained with dignity. On these respectable conditions, I am not less ambitious to be great and powerful, than it is natural for a young man to be with such brilliant examples before him. But even these objects I can chearfully relinquish, the moment my duty to my country, my character, my friends, render such a sacrifice indispensable. Then I hope to retire, not disappointed, but triumphant; triumphant in the conviction, that my talents, humble as they are, have been earnestly, zealously, and strenuously employed, to the best of my apprehension, in promoting the truest welfare of my country; and that, however I may stand chargeable with weakness of understanding, or error of judgment, nothing can be imputed to my official capacity, which bears the most distant connexion with an interested, a corrupt, or a dishonest intention. Nor is it any part of my plan, whenever I may quit my present station, to follow the noble earl, now at the head of his majesty's councils, to such a fortress, as the honorable gentleman promised to rear, for those of his friends, who should find themselves duped as he had been *. The self-created and

* This alluded to a declaration made by Mr. Fox in the house of commons, soon after he had quitted office in consequence of lord Shelburne's appointment

self-appointed successors to the present administration, have asserted with much confidence, that this is likely to be the case. I can assure them, however, that when they come from that side of the house to this, I will, for one, most readily and cordially accept the exchange. The only desire I would indulge and cherish on the subject, is, that the service of the public may be ably, disinterestedly, and faithfully performed. To those who feel for their country as I wish to do, and will strive to do, it matters little, who are out, or who are in; but it matters much, that her affairs be conducted with wisdom, with firmness, with dignity, and with credit. Those entrusted to my care I will resign, let me hope, into hands much better qualified to do them justice than mine. But I will not mimic the parade of the honorable gentleman, in avowing, and inviting others to, an indiscriminate opposition to whoever may be appointed to succeed. I will march out with no warlike, no hostile, no menacing protestations; but hoping that the new administration will have no other object in view than the real and substantial welfare of the community at large; that they will bring with them into office those public and patriotic principles, which some of them formerly held, but which they abandoned in opposition; that they will save the state, and promote the great purposes of public good, with as much steadiness, integrity, and solid advantage, as I am confident it must one day appear, the earl of Shelburne and his colleagues have done, I promise

to the head of the treasury, that many of those who at present remained with the new minister would hereafter find themselves disappointed and duped, and would be glad to retire to him (Mr. Fox), as a fortress, from whence they might assail the measures of government.

CHAP. II. 1783.

them beforehand, my uniform and best support on every occasion, where I can honestly and conscientiously assist them.

" In short, sir, whatever appears dishonorable or inadequate in the peace on your table, is strictly chargeable to the noble lord in the blue ribbon, whose profusion of the public money, whose notorious temerity and obstinacy in prosecuting the war, which originated in his pernicious and oppressive policy, and whose utter incapacity to fill the station he occupied, rendered peace of any description indispensable to the preservation of the state. The small part which fell to my lot in this ignominious transaction, as it is called, was divided with a set of men, whom the dispassionate public must, on reflection, unite to honor. Unused as I am to the factious and jarring clamors of this day's debate, I look up to the independent part of the house, and to the public at large, if not for that impartial approbation which my conduct deserves, at least for that acquittal from blame, to which my innocence entitles me. I have ever been most anxious to do my utmost for the interest of my country; it has been my sole concern to act an honest and upright part; and I am disposed to think, that every instance of my official deportment will bear a fair and honorable construction. With these intentions I ventured forward on the public notice; and can appeal with some degree of confidence to both sides of the house, for the consistency of my political conduct. My earliest impressions were in favor of the noblest and most disinterested modes of serving the public: these impressions are still dear to my heart; I will cherish them as a legacy infinitely more valuable

than the greatest inheritance. On these principles alone I came into parliament and into place; and I now take the whole house to witness, that I have not been under the necessity of contradicting one public declaration I have ever made. I am, notwithstanding, at the disposal of this house; and with their decision, whatever it shall be, I will cheerfully comply. It is impossible to deprive me of those feelings, which must always result from the sincerity of my best endeavors to fulfil with integrity every official engagement. You may take from me, sir, the privileges and emoluments of place; but you cannot, and you shall not, take from me those habitual and warm regards for the prosperity of Great Britain, which constitute the honor, the happiness, the pride of my life; and which, I trust, death alone can extinguish. And with this consolation, the loss of power, sir, and the loss of fortune, though I affect not to despise, I hope I shall soon be able to forget,

> Laudo manentem; si celeres quatit
> Pennas, resigno quæ dedit ——
> ———————— probamque,
> Pauperiem sine dote quæro*."

This animated and eloquent speech drew forth the warmest applause from every part of the house, and was universally

* When Mr. Pitt delivered this speech, I was in the gallery of the house of commons, sitting next to a young man, who was then a great admirer of Mr. Pitt, but was afterwards one of his most determined and powerful opponents as a member of the house: he did not know me, but we had entered into conversation during the debate; and when Mr. Pitt quoted this passage from Horace, he turned to me, and said with great eagerness, "Why did he omit, 'Et mea virtute me involvo.'?"—An omission generally considered as marking equally the modesty and good taste of Mr. Pitt.

CHAP. II. 1783.

acknowledged to display a perfect acquaintance with the situation of this country, and of those powers with which we had been at war, as well as a manly and truly patriotic spirit. Lord North followed Mr. Pitt, beginning with these words: "I rise up, sir, late as it is, and much as has been said, to make some reply to that part of the debate especially, which concerns me and my friends. Several of the speakers have addressed many of their invectives against me and those with whom I am connected. A great deal has been thrown out on my supposed criminality, and those imaginary artifices, to which it is alleged I owe my safety. The last speaker, whose amazing eloquence so deeply affected every member in the house, did me the honor to single me out as the object of his thunder; and it is no small presumption of my innocence, that I could hear him thunder without being dismayed, and even listen to his thunder with a mixture of astonishment and delight." He then declared that he had, while in office, uniformly acted from upright motives; and had always been ready, and still was so, to submit every action of his political life to the most scrupulous inquiry. He admitted that his administration had been unfortunate, and in its consequences extremely calamitous to the country. He confessed, that he had often been "the butt of Mr. Fox's inexhaustible powers of ridicule and asperity;" but he contended, that the present emergency called upon him to forget former animosities, and to unite with the man, by whom, as Mr. Powys expressed it, "he had been, for many years, vilified and grossly abused." He condemned the peace, and said, that all Mr. Pitt's eloquence, great as it was, would never be able to satisfy the house, that the interests of

the public had not been sacrificed by an inadequate and premature accommodation: at the same time he saw no reason why the carrying of the present motion should drive Mr. Pitt from the service of his country.

The division took place at a late hour, and the numbers were, for ministers 190, and against them 207. Lord North at first hesitated about voting for this fourth resolution; but he was told by his friends*, that his vote upon the former night would be of no avail, if he did not follow it up by a direct censure of the peace, and that in fact the resolution only expressed what he had himself said in that debate. After much persuasion he yielded, and in his speech justified his junction with Mr. Fox. At present they had no personal communication. The long and bitter enmity, which had subsisted between them, made the advances towards friendship slow and gradual.

The fifth resolution, relative to the loyalists, was withdrawn, the purport of which was in fact contained in the address to the king.

Very little was said in these debates concerning the difference of opinion in ministers, on the subject of the recognition of the independence of the American states, which had been so warmly discussed before the Christmas recess. Mr. Fox, however, acknowledged, that the provisional articles were upon that point "final, conclusive, definitive, except in the event

* Mr. Eden, afterwards lord Auckland, was supposed to be the person, who had the principal weight with lord North upon this occasion. He was called the father of the coalition; and I myself heard Mr. Sheridan attribute the coalition to him.

CHAP. II. 1783.

of what was in itself an impossibility—an eternal war." The case seems to have been this: The treaty with America was to take place, whenever peace should be made with France, but not before; and therefore lord Shelburne was right in saying, that the treaty was contingent, not absolute; and the other ministers were right in maintaining, that the acknowledgement of independence could not be recalled. The whole difference turned upon an ambiguity of words, and arose from the difficulty of bringing so many treaties, which were meant to depend upon each other, to a conclusion at the same point of time, joined to a conviction universally felt, that terms being settled between Great Britain and America as an independent state, peace would soon be adjusted with the European powers, whose primary object in entering into the war was, to detach the American colonies from all connection with the mother country.

It will be necessary to mention more particularly some previous circumstances relative to Mr. Fox and lord North, to account for the effect produced by their junction at this moment. Mr. Fox came into parliament at the general election in 1768, though only in the twentieth year of his age; and in his first speech in the house of commons, in February 1769, upon the question of the Middlesex election, he supported ministers against Mr. Wilkes, who was then at the zenith of his popularity. In February 1770, he became a lord of the admiralty, lord North having a few days before been placed at the head of the treasury. In January 1773, he was made a lord of the treasury; but in March 1774, in consequence of

a disagreement with lord North, he was dismissed from office, and from that time uniformly opposed administration; always expressing himself with the greatest contempt, and even with rancorous violence, towards lord North. It was not merely the detail of his measures which Mr. Fox reprobated—he inveighed with the most pointed severity against the general system upon which lord North acted, and was studious to shew, that, if persevered in, it must lead to the ruin of the country. He called him the great criminal of the state, whose blood must expiate the calamities he had brought upon his country; the object of future impeachment*, whom an indignant nation would surely in the end compel to make some atonement for his offences, on a scaffold; he protested that he could not trust himself in the same room with him. And when it was evident, in the beginning of the year 1782, that some change in administration must take place, he declared that he should be "infamous," if he formed any connexion with the men then in office; those "weak, wicked, and incapable advisers of the crown, who were the cause of all the present calamities: these, and these only, were the persons, whom he and his friends would for ever proscribe." However erroneous lord North's political principles might be esteemed; however culpable he might be considered for the neglect of the finances of the country; however unequal he might be thought to the management of the dispute with America, and the conduct of the war which followed; and however unwise and disastrous, in these and in other respects, his administration might be

* Mr. Burke likewise declared, that lord North was a fit object of impeachment, and that he had "an impeachment ready drawn in his pocket."

36722

CHAP. II.

represented, full credit was given to him for acting from the conviction of his own mind. He always stood forward, with manliness and spirit, in defence of his own measures and system, against the attacks and aspersions of Mr. Fox; and though, in general, more temperate in his language than his antagonist, he occasionally retorted upon him with great keenness, and not unfrequently exposed him to ridicule, by lively sallies of wit and humor, in which he greatly excelled. In short, every one knew that Mr. Fox and lord North had not only professed and supported opposite political principles, but that they had for many years been contending against each other, with the most marked personality, each declaring, that he could not trust his honor in the hands of the other. With respect to the peace, if the terms were not so advantageous as might have been wished, it was obviously to be attributed, as was remarked in the debates, to the losses and defeats which this country had sustained, and to the exhausted state to which it was known to be reduced, through the incapacity and mismanagement of lord North and his colleagues; and Mr. Fox's loud and incessant clamors for peace were fresh in the memory of every one. While opposing lord North, he had declared, that peace could not be purchased by too great sacrifices—that peace upon any terms, peace for a year, for a month, for a day, was indispensable, under the present circumstances of the country. And when in office, he asserted, as was also noticed, that he found the country in a situation far worse, and less competent, to carry on the war than he had expected—declarations which must have given the enemy considerable advantage in the negotiations for peace. In the

first debate on the treaties, Mr. Fox had said, that even this peace was preferable to the continuance of the war; and on the night he and lord North had joined in voting a censure upon the terms of the articles, they had, by a previous resolution, declared, that the house of commons would support his majesty in making a definitive treaty, upon the basis of those very articles, which they then denominated inadequate and disgraceful. Although, therefore, parliament had an unquestionable right to express its sentiments upon the treaties, it was impossible that the condemnation of them could be attended with any public benefit. No consideration, indeed, of that sort was urged by Mr. Fox or lord North, as an apology for their conduct: on the contrary, they scarcely dissembled, that, even in their own opinion, there was some danger of public faith being shaken by the very motion, which they supported and carried in the house of commons, and of the nation being again plunged into all the calamities of war. To see these two men suddenly coalesce, and appear willing, in utter disregard of every private feeling and public principle, to share together that power, of which it had been the object of their lives to represent each other as altogether unworthy—to see them unite in condemning a peace, which the one had rendered, and the other pronounced to be, necessary, upon no ground of national advantage, and from no assignable motive, but that of gratifying their ambition, could not fail to excite astonishment and disgust: it not only made them unpopular at the time, but fixed an indelible stigma upon their public characters. "This," Mr. Powys observed, "was the age of strange confederacies. The world had seen great and ambitious

CHAP. II. 1783.

despots stand forth the protectors of an infant republic: France and Spain had combined to establish the rising liberties of America. The house of commons now beheld the counterpart of this picture: a monstrous coalition had taken place between a noble lord and an illustrious commoner: the lofty assertor of the prerogative, had joined in alliance with the worshipper of the majesty of the people." "This alliance," said a contemporary writer, "seemed so much beyond the usual pliancy even of politicians; the personal violence of their former hostility seemed so repugnant to every idea of junction, that the natural integrity of the people felt the coalition as one of those public violations of consistency, one of those public derelictions of principle, which destroy all future confidence, and forfeit all future esteem*."

THE consequence of the two divisions upon the peace was, that lord Shelburne and the rest of the ministers resigned their offices, or declared themselves ready to do so, as soon as their successors should be fixed upon; and it became necessary that a new administration should be formed. The king was very reluctant to apply to lord North and Mr. Fox. Lord North had received the most decided proofs of his majesty's confidence and favor, through a series of twelve years; and his union with Mr. Fox, whose principles and conduct he knew to be peculiarly obnoxious to the king, could not but be highly displeasing to his majesty, especially as it was evident, that in an administration, consisting of lord North and Mr. Fox, and their respective adherents, Mr. Fox must, from his superior

* Review of the principal proceedings of the parliament of 1784.

energy and talents, have the chief influence. Lord Shelburne was the only person in whom the house of commons had shewn a want of confidence; and he was with reason considered as more immediately the author of the treaties, which had been condemned, although all the members of the cabinet were undoubtedly responsible for them. Mr. Pitt's character, both for ability and integrity, was not only unimpeached, but stood very high in parliament and in the country; while that of lord North and Mr. Fox was greatly lowered by their late "very extraordinary and unnatural coalition." His majesty was therefore induced to propose to Mr. Pitt to succeed lord Shelburne, as first lord of the treasury, with full powers to nominate his colleagues.

This was a most dazzling offer to so young a man, and demanded, both upon private and public grounds, the most serious consideration*. By far the greater number of the friends whom Mr. Pitt consulted, advised him to accept the offer, which had been so graciously made, and was so honorable to himself. But, after reflecting upon the opposition which he must experience, from the two numerous and powerful parties, at the head of which were lord North and Mr. Fox, he was convinced, there was no prospect of his obtaining that degree of support in parliament, without which no administration can be effective or beneficial to the country; and it was obvious, that an unsuccessful attempt on his part, would add strength to those who were already too strong. Fearing therefore that his acceptance would only remove a present difficulty,

* On the 25th Mr. Dundas moved, that the house should adjourn to the 28th. The object of this motion, though not avowed, was, to give time to Mr. Pitt to consider his majesty's offer, and it was carried by a majority of 49 to 37.

CHAP. II. 1783.

at the expence of future comfort to the king, and perhaps be productive of material injury to the public, he felt himself under an imperious obligation to decline the offer; thus exhibiting a striking contrast to the conduct of his competitors, who were ready to run any risque, and to make any sacrifice, for the purpose of obtaining power.

This decision, however, did not cause him in the slightest degree to relax his attention to the public service. On the 28th of February he brought in the bill, the substance of which he had explained on the 10th, for a reform in the customs. It was read a first time, and Mr. Burke made some objections to the principle upon which it was founded; but it was ordered to be printed, and read a second time on Monday fortnight. Mr. Pitt took this opportunity of stating, though not immediately connected with the subject of the bill, that very large sums had been issued from the exchequer to public accountants, some as far back as the seven years war, for the expenditure of which no account whatever had been given—that these sums, he had reason to think, amounted to no less than 50 millions sterling. He did not deny, that by far the greater part of this money had been fairly and justly expended; but he contended, that the accountants should be compelled to produce their vouchers, and that measures should be taken to prevent accounts being so long withheld in future. As a preparatory step, therefore, he moved, "That there be laid before this house, a list of the public accountants who have received public money by way of imprest, and upon account, and who have not yet accounted for the same; also of those persons, from whom balances of declared accounts are still due,

with the sums respectively unaccounted for by each." This motion was agreed to unanimously, after a short conversation between Mr. Pitt and Mr. Burke.

An act of parliament having passed in 1776, soon after the American disturbances broke out, for restraining the commercial intercourse between Great Britain and America, the restoration of peace, and the recognition of the independence of the United States, rendered necessary, not only the repeal of that restraining act, but also the establishment of a new system of trade with the inhabitants of the United States, in consequence of their ceasing to be British subjects. This business engaged the attention of ministers, immediately after the signature of the provisional articles; but it was soon discovered, that, occupied as they then were, it was impossible for them to digest a complete plan within a reasonable period: "It was not," as Mr. Pitt observed, "a trifling regulation which would suffice—a revolution, perhaps unprecedented in any former age, had taken place, and would of course materially change the commercial interests of all Europe." It appeared, however, very desirable, that English trade with the United States should commence with as little delay as possible, large orders having arrived from America; and if not speedily executed, there might be danger of the market being forestalled by other countries. It was therefore determined, that a temporary bill for that purpose should be submitted to parliament, which might continue in force till there should be leisure for maturely and fully considering the subject. Accordingly, in this interval, Mr. Pitt presented to the house of commons, "A bill for making provisional regulations for opening an

CHAP. II. 1783. intercourse with America." This was instantly acknowledged, by all parties and individuals, to be a question of great importance and difficulty; as the conditions and privileges, which we should grant to America, might affect the principle and operation of our navigation laws, and interfere with the commercial treaties subsisting or depending between Great Britain and other powers: nor could it be then ascertained what reciprocal advantages we might expect from America. The bill gave rise to numerous and long debates; and at length, after it had been committed and re-committed, and a variety of amendments adopted from both sides of the house, without any division, or a single acrimonious remark upon its principle or any of its clauses, it was unanimously agreed, on the proposal of Mr. Pitt, that it should stand over till new ministers were appointed, who might either proceed with it, or substitute some other measure in its room. In one of the last of these debates, Mr. Eden, who had been an active member of opposition during lord Shelburne's administration, and whose ideas by no means coincided with Mr. Pitt's upon this point, said, that "he must do justice to the right honorable gentleman who had introduced the bill: it had been a most teazing and troublesome discussion, but it had been throughout conducted by that right honorable gentleman, with a liberality, patience, candor, politeness, and good humor, which would for ever command the admiration and respect of every individual concerned."

By the preliminary articles of peace, it was stipulated, that the islands of Grenada and the Grenadines, St. Vincent, Dominica, St. Christopher's, Nevis, and Montserrat, which the

French had taken during the war, should be restored to Great Britain; but that Tobago, which had also been taken by them, should remain in their possession: and that St. Lucia, which had been taken by the English, should be restored to France: These changes rendered some new regulations immediately necessary, for carrying on trade with those islands; and Mr. Pitt introduced a bill for that purpose, which passed without difficulty.

On the 3rd of March, the king, not having been able to shake Mr. Pitt's determination, and being desirous that the situation of prime minister should not be filled by any one of Mr. Fox's party, sent for lord North, and proposed to him to return to the head of the treasury; but his lordship represented, that it would be impossible for him to serve his majesty in that capacity, under present circumstances Nothing, therefore, remained to his majesty, but to learn what arrangement might be proposed by lord North and Mr. Fox, who by this time, it was understood, had entered into strict engagements with each other; and a communication was accordingly made to them. The duke of Portland, whom they designed to be first lord of the treasury, had an audience of the king on the 13th of March; and, in consequence of powers received from his majesty, an attempt was made to form an administration. But difficulties arose; and there was no immediate prospect of their being removed. The want of an administration had been frequently complained of in the house of commons; and on the 18th of March, Mr. Coke, member for Norfolk, gave notice, that if an administration should not be formed by

CHAP. II. 1783.

the 21st, he would move an address to his majesty upon the subject. On that day, he informed the house, then very full, that he understood the arrangement was nearly, if not wholly, settled; and therefore he declined making the motion, of which he had given conditional notice. Fresh impediments, however, occurred; and on the 24th, Mr. Coke stated the general idea, that the negotiation for a new administration was entirely broken off, and Mr. Pitt, when appealed to, having confirmed that statement, Mr. Coke moved, "That an humble address be presented to his majesty, that his majesty will be graciously pleased to take into his serious consideration, the very distracted and unsettled state of the empire, after a long and exhausting war; and that his majesty will therefore condescend to a compliance with the wishes of this house, by forming an administration entitled to the confidence of his people*, and such as may have a tendency to put an end to the unfortunate divisions and distractions of the country." This motion was seconded by lord Surry; and produced a debate of considerable length, in which several members severely reprobrated the coalition, and others as warmly defended it. Some doubt also was expressed, whether the motion would not interfere with the king's right to appoint his own ministers. Mr. Pitt, in allusion to what had been said, observed, that he

* When notice was first given of this motion, a member, who disapproved the coalition, signified his intention of adding a clause as an amendment, requesting his majesty, not to appoint any person a minister, who, "by his mismanagement of public affairs, and by want of foresight and ability, when in office, had lost the confidence of the people." These words were taken from a motion of Mr. Fox against lord North, when at the head of the treasury. The amendment, however, was not moved.

could not so far renounce the sentiments which he had formerly avowed, or so far lose sight of the just grounds of confidence in others, as to call the abandonment of principles the forgetting of old animosities and past prejudices. He therefore thought it necessary to declare, explicitly, that he could not bring himself to adopt the reasoning, by which it was attempted to justify the coalition; and that no consideration should induce him to join those, who, by their grossly contradictory assertions and flagrant inconsistency of conduct, had forfeited all claim to confidence; that he could not conform his ideas to the tide of interest, or adapt his political opinions to the prevalence of party; that one great principle was firmly fixed in his mind, by which his conduct should be uniformly regulated, and that what he reprobated to-day, he should not applaud to-morrow; that he could not coalesce with those, whose principles he believed to be diametrically opposite to his own; that a similarity of ideas was indispensable in friendship, and without that similarity there could be no union, public or private, which would be either permanent, or honorable to the parties. The motion did not appear to him, to be any infringement of the constitutional prerogative of the crown; but, at the same time, he thought it not calculated to be of any service, as it only requested his majesty to appoint an administration, which he was already vested with power to do. And as to the administration being entitled to the confidence of the people, he desired to know, who were to be the judges upon that point, and how it was to be decided. In the latter part of his speech, he adverted to the prevalent opinion, that the want of an administration was owing to a disagreement between the duke

CHAP. II. 1783.

of Portland and lord North, about filling up the offices: upon which lord North and Mr. Fox declared, that though some difference of opinion had arisen upon that subject, it had not produced a delay of more than 24 hours, and that it by no means caused the failure of the attempt to form a new arrangement*. The motion was then agreed to, without a division, and with only about four dissentient voices.

On the 26th the house was informed, that the address had been presented to the king, and that his majesty had been pleased to return the following answer: "That it was his earnest desire to do every thing in his power to comply with the wishes expressed by his faithful commons." Lord Surry declared his confidence in his majesty's assurance; but at the same time gave notice, that if an administration should not be formed by Monday (the 31st,) he should move an inquiry into the cause of the delay.

In consequence of the unsuccessful conclusion of the above negotiation, the king again offered the treasury to Mr. Pitt; and after several times conversing with him upon the subject, at a late hour on Monday the 24th of March, he wrote a letter to him from Windsor, in the most pressing terms, which, after complaints of the treatment he had received from the duke of Portland and lord North, ended with these words, "I trust, therefore, Mr. Pitt will exert himself to-morrow, to plan his mode of filling up the offices that will be vacant, so as to be able, on Wednesday morning, to accept the situation his

* The real cause was, the unwillingness of his majesty to remove the principal officers of his household, and to appoint in their room persons proposed by the duke of Portland.

character and talents fit him to hold, when I shall be in town. CHAP. II. 1783.
before twelve, ready to receive him." To which Mr. Pitt returned the following answer the next day: "Mr. Pitt received this morning, the honor of your majesty's gracious commands. With infinite pain he feels himself under the necessity of humbly expressing to your majesty, that with every sentiment of dutiful attachment to your majesty, and zealous desire to contribute to the public service, it is utterly impossible for him, after the fullest consideration of the situation in which things stand, and of what passed yesterday in the house of commons, to think of undertaking, under such circumstances, the situation which your majesty has had the condescension and goodness to propose to him. As what he now presumes to write is the final result of his best reflection, he should think himself criminal, if by delaying till to-morrow, humbly to lay it before your majesty, he should be the cause of your majesty's not immediately turning your royal mind to such a plan of arrangement, as the exigency of the present circumstances may, in your majesty's wisdom, seem to require."

Mr. Pitt's inflexible determination to decline these repeated offers, made with so much earnestness and confidence—a determination, which, it was obvious, could proceed only from a sense of public duty—was very generally admitted to be a rare instance of moderation and disinterestedness. Having before displayed the most brilliant talents and powerful eloquence, he now gave full proof of a firm and strong mind, under the guidance of a sound understanding and sober discretion; and the admiration of these qualities, both splendid and substantial, was greatly heightened by the consideration,

CHAP. II. 1783. that the person, in whom they were so eminently united, had not yet completed his 24th year. Surely this single act is sufficient to refute the charge of inordinate ambition, which has been sometimes urged against Mr. Pitt. What could be more captivating to a young and aspiring mind, than the offer of being prime minister of his country? What could be more difficult to resist, than the sentiments and wishes of his friends, and the pressing importunity of his sovereign? What more alluring to most men, than the means of disappointing the hopes of political rivals? Whoever had an opportunity of judging of what passed in Mr. Pitt's breast upon this, and indeed upon every occasion where the public interest was concerned, could not but be convinced, that no person was less under the influence of an improper love of power. The good of his country was ever the ruling principle of his mind.

On the 31st of March, Mr. Pitt acquainted the house of commons, that he had resigned the office of chancellor of the exchequer; and upon being asked, whether he knew if any new arrangement was likely soon to take place, he replied, that he had no certain knowledge upon the subject, but he concluded, from his majesty's answer to the address, that there would be no unnecessary delay. Lord Surry, after stating a variety of circumstances, which required the immediate appointment of an administration, proposed the following resolution, as a ground-work of their future proceedings, "That a considerable time having now elapsed without an administration responsible for the conduct of public affairs, the interposition of this house, in the present alarming crisis, is

become necessary:" But this resolution being strongly objected to by Mr. Pitt, lord John Cavendish, and lord North, upon the ground of its infringing the royal prerogative, and of its implying a doubt of the sincerity of the assurance conveyed in his majesty's answer to the late address, it was withdrawn; and lord Surry afterwards proposed an address, of considerable length, to his majesty, representing in detail, that the state of affairs, both at home and abroad, demanded the immediate appointment of an efficient responsible administration, and repeating the supplications of the house, that his majesty would be pleased to take the necessary measures for that purpose: But this address was also objected to upon nearly the same grounds as the resolution; and after a long debate, it was withdrawn, principally in consequence of a declaration from Mr. Pitt, that an administration would probably be formed very shortly; with a notice, however, from lord Surry, that it certainly would be moved two days afterwards, if an administration should not then be appointed.

At length, on the 2nd of April, after repeated impediments and interruptions, which strongly marked the reluctance of the king in acceding to the arrangement, a new administration was announced, consisting of the following persons, the duke of Portland, first lord of the treasury; Mr. Fox and lord North, secretaries of state; lord John Cavendish, chancellor of the exchequer; lord Keppel, first lord of the admiralty*; lord

* Lord Keppel was appointed first lord of the admiralty when lord Rockingham came into office, in 1782, and he continued in that situation when lord Shelburne was made first lord of the treasury; but disapproving the preliminary articles of peace, he resigned before they were discussed in parliament, and was succeeded by lord Howe.

CHAP. II. 1783.

Stormont, president of the council; and lord Carlisle, lord privy seal. The great seal was put into commission, at the head of which was lord Loughborough; and the other commissioners were, Mr. justice Ashurst and Mr. baron Hotham. The earl of Mansfield, chief justice of the king's bench, was to act as speaker of the house of lords*. Earnest application was made to Mr. Pitt to resume the office of chancellor of the exchequer, particularly by lord John Cavendish himself: but to this proposal he would by no means listen, for the reasons which have been already stated. There was also a general change in the officers of his majesty's household.

NEARLY six weeks had elapsed, since lord Shelburne and his colleagues declared, that they only remained in office till successors to them should be appointed, during which time Mr. Pitt† conducted the business of the house of commons in a manner, which greatly raised his character, and procured him universal respect. In this interval, besides the ordinary proceedings relative to the annual estimates, the issue of exchequer bills, and the mutiny bill, none of which could be postponed, several important subjects were discussed, and there were numerous debates on questions arising out of the treaties of peace recently concluded, and the long continuance of the

* The chief justice of the king's bench is generally in the commission, but he never acts as speaker of the house of lords, when there is a lord chancellor or a lord keeper, except in case of illness.

† Mr. Townshend, though he continued secretary of state, took very little part in the business of the house of commons after the second division upon the peace; and, on the 4th of March, he was created lord Sydney.

ministerial interregnum; upon all which occasions Mr. Pitt spoke and acted as minister, acknowledging his responsibility, and displaying the same zeal and diligence, as if he had been permanently fixed in office. He supported this singular situation with so much dignity and propriety, that while scarcely any one regretted the resignation of lord Shelburne, persons of every party and description expressed an earnest wish, that the public might not lose the services of Mr. Pitt, in whose integrity all confided, and whose abilities all admired.

To give some idea of the general opinion which prevailed at this moment, I shall quote the beginning of a speech of Mr. Powys, on the 6th of March, upon the subject of pensions lately granted: he said, "If ever there was a moment in which it would be presumptuous in him to submit a question to the house, he was sure that this was the moment; for this was a time when a system was set up, and gloried in by some people, of despising public opinion, and acting upon principles which would set that opinion at defiance*: at such a time, when party bore the sway, it was peculiarly presumptuous in him to intermeddle with state affairs, who was of that description of men, who were neither the leaders nor the followers of a party. However, let what would be thought of him, he would do what he conceived to be his duty. The administration of this country had for some time been burning in the socket, and had at last lost its light; but perhaps it was, in one sense, no misfortune; for when he considered who it was that was at the head of that ministry, he might say,

* This so obviously referred to Mr. Fox's coalition with lord North, that Mr. Fox could not but notice it in his speech of this day.

CHAP. II. 1783. with the tailor in the farce, 'that it was better to have no head at all.' In the dissolution of that ministry, however, there was one thing greatly to be regretted, the retreat from office of the right honorable gentleman on the floor, (Mr. Pitt,) whose shining abilities qualified him for any situation; but it was to be hoped, that he would not long remain unemployed. Great talents were public property; and therefore the public ought not to be deprived of them. He was sorry, that going to speak of pensions, as he then was, he had it not in his power to say, that one had been granted to the right honorable gentleman, who had been taken from a profession, to which he would have been an ornament, and in which his abilities must have soon raised him to one of its most important offices. His honor, however, was his own; and he could only say, it was in the care of a most intelligent and watchful guardian. If he would not blend with others in a system of politics, to which he could not conscientiously give his countenance, and was determined to retire, he would carry with him the applause, the esteem, and admiration of his country. This could not be called poverty, but wealth of the most desirable nature, which might excite the envy of the pensioned and the titled statesman. The right honorable gentleman would retire with dignity, rich in conscious rectitude, rich in talents, rich in character, rich in the confidence of that house, rich in every quality which could adorn the man and the statesman."

After explaining the grounds upon which the pensions referred to by Mr. Powys had been granted, Mr. Pitt said, that, "As far as regarded the past conduct of the ministers, he had felt no sort of embarrassment in unbosoming himself fully to

the house. There was, however, a part of his honorable friend's speech, to which he could not so easily reply, and which excited in his mind the warmest emotions;—that was the part, in which his honorable friend had done him the honor to speak of him in terms, which must necessarily be imputed to the partiality of friendship: but he did assure the house, that to afford satisfaction by any part of his conduct, to a gentleman so perfectly independent, and for whose character he had so much reverence and esteem, would gratify his ambition in a degree, next to that, if ever he should be so happy to experience it, of his country approving his services, and deeming them in the smallest respect conducive to the public welfare. With regard to those rewards and honors which had awaited his colleagues in office, he was neither so weak nor so rash as to expect or desire, what he was conscious he had no pretensions to receive. It was sufficient for him, called upon as he had been, at an early period of his life, to fill the exalted station in which he had been placed, that his weak endeavors to discharge the duties of it faithfully and diligently, had not been disapproved. He came into office with nothing to risque; his colleagues had much to hazard: he had no right, therefore, vainly to suppose himself upon a footing with them; and he did assure the honorable gentleman, and the house, that his reward would be fully adequate to the utmost of his wishes, if he should have the good fortune to find, that he had not lost the favorable opinion of that house and of his country."

CHAPTER THE THIRD:

1783

End of Session of Parliament—Mr. Pitt visits France—Parliament meets—Mr. Fox's India Bill—Mr. Pitt appointed First Lord of the Treasury.

CHAP. III. 1783.

THE new ministers having entered upon their respective offices, and the other situations being filled by their friends, the business of the nation proceeded in its usual course. Mr. Fox took the lead in the house of commons*, and was understood to have the principal influence in this motley administration; lord North condescending to act a subordinate part under the man, to whom he had been for so many years the object of contempt and reproach.

On the 9th of April, Mr. Fox announced his intention of introducing two bills, in the room of Mr. Pitt's American intercourse bill. By one of them, he proposed merely to repeal the prohibitory acts; and by the other, to remove the impediments with respect to bonds, certificates, and other documents, which stood in the way of trade with the Americans, and to give the king in council power to regulate the duties and drawbacks upon goods imported from, and exported to, America: these were the only points, which, in his judgment,

* On the 8th of April, the duke of Portland, in answer to a question from the duke of Richmond, said, that it was intended soon to call up lord North to the house of lords; but he continued in the house of commons till the death of his father, the earl of Guildford, which did not take place till several years afterwards.

at present required the authority of parliament, as he preferred leaving all other subjects to be settled by the treaty then under negotiation, and which he thought might speedily be concluded; and therefore he designed that the second bill should remain in force only six weeks. Mr. Pitt did not object to this mode of proceeding, being convinced of the necessity of opening an intercourse with America as early as possible, in order to prevent other countries from pre-occupying the American market. He sincerely wished, he said, that the negotiation might succeed as fully as Mr. Fox expected; but when he recollected the difficulties, which had arisen in the late discussions in that house, and the vast variety of considerations necessary to be adverted to, in a permanent commercial treaty with America, he owned he was not so sanguine, as to think it possible, that an arrangement, so comprehensive in its nature, so multifarious in its objects, and altogether so seriously important, could be completed within the short period which had been mentioned. It was from an idea of the unavoidable delay, which must attend the bringing to an issue such a treaty as this, that he had been induced to propose a temporary measure, adapted to the necessity of the moment, and which in fact included all the provisions enumerated by Mr. Fox. The bills passed without any opposition; but the house of lords extended the duration of the second bill to the 20th of the following December, in consequence of ministers having discovered, that the treaty, as Mr. Pitt predicted, would not be brought to a conclusion so quickly as they had at first expected.

The chancellor of the exchequer opened the budget on the 16th of April; and it appeared, that the loan of 12 millions, required for the present year, was negotiated in the same private manner as the loans under lord North's administration: 7,700,000 *l.* were subscribed by eleven bankers, nearly upon terms proposed by themselves and previously agreed upon; and the remaining 4,300,000 *l.* were distributed by the chancellor of the exchequer himself, among the other bankers and monied men, the public companies, the clerks of the treasury, and of the bank, and his private friends. This justified Mr. Pitt's suspicion, as far at least as one important branch of the public service was concerned, that the old system would be still pursued.

Mr. Pitt severely censured both the terms of the loan, and the principle upon which it had been conducted. He entered into calculations to shew, that the lenders, according to the price of stocks on that day, had no less a bonus than six per cent, which was so much more than had been usual upon similar occasions, that even ministers could not defend the measure, upon any other ground except the impossibility, under the present peculiar circumstances, of borrowing the money upon better terms: of this, however, no fair trial had been made by competition, although that mode of negotiating the loan had been suggested to the chancellor of the exchequer, by four of the most considerable bankers in London; and he acknowledged, that he had received an offer of 60 millions from different persons. There were several other debates upon this business, in which Mr. Pitt accused Mr. Fox and lord

John Cavendish, of the same disregard to economy, and of aiming at the same species of influence in the distribution of the loan, which they had so often, so recently, and so vehemently reprobated in lord North, when he was at the head of the treasury. The premium rose to more than eight per cent; and a bargain so manifestly disadvantageous to the public *, and so palpably inconsistent with former declarations, could not but be injurious to the credit of administration †."

On the 7th of May, Mr. Pitt again brought the business of parliamentary reform before the house of commons; and as he had not succeeded in his motion last year, for the appointment of a committee to examine into the general state of the representation, and some objection was made to that mode of proceeding, he now thought it right to propose a specific plan. After an eloquent eulogium upon the constitution of England, he desired the house not to suppose, that he meant, with the mad hand of modern visionaries and speculative reformers, rashly and sacrilegiously to attempt an innovation on what our ancestors had purchased at so large an expence of treasure and of blood, and which they had delivered to us as the most valuable of all trusts; which had already proved the source of so much happiness, and of so much glory; and which it

* Lord Shelburne, in the house of lords, said, that the loss to the public was 650,000*l.*

† The consols, 3 per cents, at the end of March were at 70, but fell before lord John Cavendish quitted the exchequer in the following December, to 56, which must have been caused by the view the public took of the management of the finances, and by the general want of confidence in ministers, as there was no public event to account for that depression.

CHAP. III. 1783.

was so obviously the interest and the duty of every man to cherish, support, and defend. His intention was far different: he wished only to restore the true spirit of the constitution; to renovate it upon its own principles; and to bring it back to that degree of vigor, which the lapse of time, the alteration of circumstances, and a variety of events, to which all human institutions are liable, had tended to weaken and diminish. He reprobated the scheme of universal suffrage as absurd, impracticable, and not known or attempted at any period of the British history. His idea of representation, he said, was this: that the members, once chosen and returned to parliament, were, in effect, the representatives of the people at large, as well of those who did not vote at all, or who having voted, gave their votes against them, as of those by whose suffrages they were actually seated in the house. There ought, however, to be a community of interests between the representatives and the represented, without which it would be in vain to expect the house of commons to be the guardian of the people's freedom, or to act as a check or control upon the executive power. Considering these great objects as not sufficiently secured by the present system, and conceiving that members for boroughs were more liable to the operation of undue influence, than those who were returned for counties, he proposed, that the number of county members should be increased by one hundred at least; and that every borough should be disfranchised, upon proof before an election committee of the house of commons, that a majority of the voters had been bribed and corrupted. By this expedient the boroughs would either be kept free from corruption, or would be gradually abolished.

With a view of carrying this plan into execution, Mr. Pitt submitted to the house three resolutions; the first of which related to bribery and expence at elections; the second, to the disfranchisement of boroughs, under the above circumstances; and the third, to the addition of county members, and of representatives of the metropolis.

Lord North, in opposing these resolutions, said, that in the whole course of his parliamentary engagements, he had never listened with so much care to any speech, as he had to the one made by the right honorable mover, (Mr. Pitt;) and he must do that gentleman the justice to say, that he had never in his life been better paid for his attention. The candor, the moderation, the ingenuity, and eloquence, displayed by that gentleman, were such as did honor to the illustrious body of which he was so distinguished a member*. The house divided upon the order of the day, moved by lord North, for which 293 voted, and 149 against it; and thus Mr. Pitt failed by a much greater majority than before, which was, perhaps, to be attributed to the increased influence of lord North, who was now secretary of state.

Some difficulties having arisen relative to Mr. Pitt's bill for a reform in the customs, and it appearing to be the wish of several respectable persons, that the business should be deferred till next session, Mr. Pitt consented. But, that the public might suffer as little loss or inconvenience as possible, from

* It should be acknowledged to the honor of lord North, that he always spoke of Mr. Pitt in the handsomest terms, though he knew Mr. Pitt's unfavorable opinion of him as a public man.

CHAP. III. 1783. the delay, he moved, on the 30th of May, a resolution, forbidding the grant of any patent office in the customs, in possession or reversion, except during pleasure, before the next session. Mr. Fox said, he had not the least objection to the resolution: he rose only to desire, that if he allowed the motion to pass, without any opposition on his part, his acquiescence might not be interpreted into an approbation of the principle of the bill, or disapprobation of the mode of giving places by patent. Mr. Pitt admitted, that this explanation was perfectly consistent with his object, which was merely to leave the business open for future discussion; and the resolution passed unanimously.

On the 2nd of June, Mr. Pitt presented to the house of commons, the bill (of which he had given notice some time before,) for preventing abuses, and establishing certain regulations in the public offices: He said, that this bill embraced some of the objects pointed out in the king's speech, at the opening of the session; and that the delay in introducing it, had been caused by its comprehensive nature, and the change of administration. That the house might be informed of the grounds upon which this bill was framed, and of the degree and extent of the reformation it was intended to accomplish, he moved three resolutions, which passed unanimously, requiring to be laid before the house, an account of the fees, gratuities, and perquisites, received in eighteen public offices*;

* These offices were, the admiralty office, the ordnance office, the war office, the office of the comptroller of the army accounts, the navy office, the navy pay office, the victualling office, the sick and hurt office, the custom house, the excise office,

of the annual incidental charges incurred; and of the number of officers and clerks, with their respective salaries, employed in each of them

Mr. Burke, in speaking upon this bill, having insinuated, that exorbitant fees had been taken for passports, since the cessation of hostilities, and during the time of the late administration, Mr. Pitt desired, that the matter might be inquired into; and he himself seconded two motions, made by Mr. Burke, the one for an account of all fees received for passports, since November 30th; and the other, for copies of all letters applying for redress, or complaining of fees taken for passports during the same period. The returns to these motions proved, to the satisfaction of every one, that the fees alluded to by Mr. Burke, were the same as always had been taken under the same circumstances, and that no blame whatever was imputable to the late ministers.

Among the taxes proposed this year, by the chancellor of the exchequer, was one upon receipts, which was very much disliked in the country; and many places having instructed their representatives to vote against it, it met with great opposition in the house. But Mr. Pitt made a speech in its favor, on the 12th of June, and declared his determination to support the tax, notwithstanding all that had been said against it. Upon

the office of surveyor general of his majesty's land revenues, the office of surveyor general of his majesty's woods and forests, the tax office, the stamp office, the salt office, the post office, the hawkers' and pedlars' office, and the hackney coach office. The treasury was not included, because the fees of that office had already been regulated, and were carried to a fund out of which the secretaries and clerks were paid.

this occasion, Mr. Sheridan, secretary of the treasury, acknowledged that Mr. Pitt had spoken with infinite candor; and indeed his support was of material service to ministers, as well as highly creditable to himself. He disdained to take advantage of the unpopularity of the tax, for the purpose of distressing government; thus fulfilling his promise of affording assistance to the new administration, whenever he could do it consistently with the public interest.

He received, however, soon after, a very unsuitable return from ministers: the first and second reading of his bill for the regulation of the public offices, had taken place with very little observation; but his motion, on the 17th of June, for its being referred to a committee, was opposed by lord John Cavendish, on the ground of the inutility of the measure; and that any abuse which did exist, might be corrected by the heads of the respective offices. In reply, Mr. Pitt expressed considerable surprise at the opposition of the noble lord; and stated a variety of facts, which had come to his knowledge in consequence of inquiry he had made, to prove the necessity of such a bill; and that the correction of abuses was not to be expected from the heads of offices, who were, in fact, the persons that profited by them. He mentioned, that the chief clerk in the navy office, whose salary was about 250*l.* a year, received in gratuities, not authorized by law, 2,500*l.* a year; and that other clerks, with smaller salaries, received perquisites in the same proportion; that the accounts of contractors were examined and passed by persons, who were actually in the pay of the contractors themselves; that the secretary of the post

office, whose salary was 600*l.* a year, received a per-centage upon all packets, and that the whole emoluments of his situation amounted to 3,000*l.* a year; that offices were sold, a practice which lord John Cavendish himself had acknowledged ought to be checked; that employments in the stamp office were, in many instances, held by gentlemen's servants, who received the salaries without ever attending at the office, having, through the interest of their masters, obtained leave of absence; that large sums were unnecessarily expended by the board of works, in the repair of houses and buildings belonging to the public, and also under the head of incidental expences, which were made to include almost every thing, not only for the public offices, but for the use of persons in office at their own private houses, both in town and country; and that such was the lavish consumption of what were called stationary wares, that, in that article, lord North, the last year he was in office, put the public to the expence of 1,300*l.* one item of which was 340*l.* for whipcord. Mr. Pitt completely acquitted the noble lord of any knowledge of this absurd extravagance; but, from that very circumstance, he inferred the propriety of adopting a new system. These and other abuses of a similar description, it was the object of the present bill (he said,) to correct; and he added, that it would produce a saving of 40,000*l.* a year to the public, which was only a small part of the economical reform intended by the late ministers, if they had been permitted to remain in their situations, and for which materials had been actually collected with much labor and care, and left in the treasury. This statement shewed the great attention which Mr. Pitt had given, the short time he was chancellor of the

CHAP. III. 1783.

exchequer, to the business of every public office, concerned in the receipt or expenditure of the country; and the facts which he adduced, and the reasoning with which he accompanied them, were so striking and convincing, that, notwithstanding the objections of the present chancellor of the exchequer, Mr. Pitt's motion was agreed to without a division, and the bill went through the committee. It passed the house of commons, on the 19th of June; ministers, though avowedly adverse to the bill, not venturing to divide the house upon it, in any of its stages. They had probably determined, that it should be opposed in the house of lords, where they were more confident of success; and accordingly it was rejected in that house, by a majority of 40 to 24; ministers, and their adherents, voting against it. The conduct of Mr. Fox and his friends, upon this bill, afforded the country an incontestable proof, how little they were disposed to act in office upon the principles, which they had professed when in opposition.

Ministers, however, although they would not accede to Mr. Pitt's comprehensive plan, which applied to so many of the public offices, yet, observing the credit he gained by his exertions to introduce economical reform, seem to have thought that something of the kind ought to be attempted by themselves; and therefore, at the end of June, lord John Cavendish, availing himself of the suggestions in the reports of the commissioners of accounts, brought a bill into the house of commons, for abolishing the offices of chamberlain and usher of the exchequer, after the death of the present possessors, and for limiting to certain definite sums the incomes of the other principal officers in the exchequer, who were at present paid

by a per-centage upon the money issued; and whose profits increasing with the expences and distress of the country, rose, in time of war, to an enormous height. He proposed, that the auditor of the exchequer should receive 4,000 *l.* a year*; each teller, 2,700 *l.*†; and his deputy, 1,000 *l.*; the clerk of the pells, 3,000 *l.*‡; his deputy, 800 *l.*; and his receiver, 200 *l.*: these regulations were not to take place during the life-time of the present auditor, tellers, and clerk of the pells. Mr. Pitt objected to the allowances as being too large; but after several debates and divisions, the bill passed.

BEFORE the close of the session, lord John Cavendish, in consequence of a motion made by Mr. Pitt, nearly five months before, presented to the house, a book, containing, "A list of public accountants, who have received public money by way of imprest, and upon account, and who have not yet accounted for the same, and of those persons from whom balances of declared accounts are still due," by which it appeared, that the sums unaccounted for, amounted to upwards of 44 millions. Fifty millions had been mentioned by Mr. Pitt, upon the faith of this very book, which had in fact been prepared by his direction, while he was chancellor of the exchequer, but which he had not had leisure to examine accurately when he quitted office. The difference of six millions arose from a mistake made by the person employed to prepare the book, and was afterwards discovered.

* The emoluments of this office, in time of peace, were 7,000 *l.* a year.

† The emoluments of a tellership, in time of peace, were 2,500 *l.* a year.

‡ The emoluments of this office, in time of peace, were 3,300 *l.* a year.

The production of this book induced Mr. Pitt to move an address to the king, requesting his majesty to take the most effectual measures for compelling the proper persons to account for these immense sums, and to repay what remained due to the public; and also for preventing in future, similar delays in bringing public accountants to a settlement. This address, although objected to by persons in office, was at last, after some unimportant amendments, suffered to pass without a division.

THE prorogation of parliament took place on the 16th of July, soon after which I accompanied Mr. Pitt to Brighton, where we passed a few weeks, and then returned to London. In the beginning of September, Mr. Pitt, Mr. Eliot, and Mr. Wilberforce, went to France, where they remained till the middle of October, residing principally at Rheims and Paris. Mr. Pitt's name and character were well known in France, and he was every where received with great marks of distinction. This short visit was the only one he ever made to the continent.

Mr. Pitt returned to England, with an intention of resuming his profession of the law, if there should appear a fair probability of the administration being permanent; considering this as the only plan he could adopt, to preserve that independence, which he had resolved never to forfeit; but events soon took place, which prevented this idea being carried into execution.

PARLIAMENT met on the 11th of November, and the king began his speech by acquainting the two houses, that definitive treaties of peace had been concluded with the courts of France and Spain, and with the United States of America; and that

preliminary articles had been ratified with the states general of the United Provinces. His majesty then proceeded to mention, that the situation of the East India company, and the necessity of providing for the security and improvement of the revenue, were his reasons for calling parliament together at this early season; and after expressing his confidence, that they would adopt such measures, as the restoration of peace, after so long and so expensive a war, might make expedient, he concluded, by recommending temper and moderation in all their deliberations.

Upon an address being moved in the usual form, Mr. Pitt admitted, that there was not one exceptionable idea either in the speech, or in the address; but he said, it appeared to him singular, that the house was now called upon to thank his majesty for concluding definitive treaties, acknowledged to be in substance the same as the preliminary articles, for which, in the last session, the house had refused to thank the crown. He contended, that the address now proposed was, as far as the peace was concerned, in its real principle, the same as the one, which upon that occasion was rejected; and therefore he should consider the vote of this day as the panegyric of the late ministers, upon that very point for which they were then censured In pursuing the topics noticed in the king's speech, he adverted to the affairs of India, and to the state of the revenue; and concurring with the sentiments expressed by his majesty, gave his decided opinion, that those two important subjects demanded the serious and immediate attention of ministers. Mr. Fox thanked Mr. Pitt for his support; and

CHAP. III. 1783. informed the house, that on that day se'nnight he would make a motion relative to India.

BEFORE I give an account of that motion, it may be right to take a short retrospect of Indian affairs. The first English East India company was established in 1600, by charter, which was renewed by James the first, Charles the first, James the second, and William and Mary. A second company was established, by act of parliament, in 1698; and in 1708, these two companies were, by the same authority, formed into one, the views and designs of which, were, at that time, confined to commerce. Being therefore merely a society of merchants, united for the purpose of carrying on more advantageously, a valuable and distant trade, the privileges granted them were adapted to that, and to no other, object. When the company, by an unforeseen change of circumstances, and an unexpected train of events, became possessed of extensive territories with a large revenue, and exercised a species of political sovereignty over dependent princes, unknown in modern Europe, in addition to, but connected with, their commercial concerns, it was soon evident, that a set of merchants, however respectable for character and talents, were wholly incompetent, as well from the want of suitable knowledge, as of sufficient authority, to manage these complicated and arduous affairs; and those, to whom they necessarily entrusted great powers in India, being removed, from the eye of their employers, to the distance of half the globe, were too apt to yield to the temptations, which the feeble and unsuspecting inhabitants of a rich and

fertile country amply supplied; and which it was the more difficult to resist, from the conviction, that, whatever might be their conduct, they had but little to fear from the dissatisfaction or resentment of their masters at home.

The first considerable accession of territory was in 1765*; and in the years immediately following, several acts of parliament passed, which aimed at nothing beyond regulations respecting the dividends upon East India stock, and other financial matters. In 1773, the abuses and malversations in India had risen to such a height, as to call aloud for correction; and a bill was introduced by lord North, and passed in that year, for the better government of India in future; but it proved utterly inadequate to its object. Tyranny, oppression, and faithlessness, both towards states and individuals, continued and increased; the British name was disgraced by the grossest acts of violence and injustice; the territorial possessions were brought into a state of imminent danger; and the company suffered very considerable pecuniary embarrassment, in consequence of heavy expences incurred by wars with the native powers, while their servants, with few exceptions, regarding only their own private interests, acquired immense riches by fraud, peculation, extortion, and plunder.

The general situation of the company's affairs, and the conduct of the governors and others in high offices in India, had, of late years, been frequently the subjects of discussion in parliament; and at length, on the 15th of February 1781, in consequence of intelligence received from Calcutta, and of

* Namely, the duannies of Bengal, Bahar, and Orissa, and the five northern circars, by lord Clive.

CHAP. III. 1783.

petitions to the house of commons, a select committee was appointed to take into consideration the state of the administration of justice in the provinces of Bengal, Bahar, and Orissa, and their several dependencies. The committee was afterwards instructed, to consider, how the British possessions in the East Indies might be held and governed with the greatest security and advantage to this country, and by what means the happiness of the native inhabitants might be best promoted. General Smith was chairman of this committee, which consisted principally of persons in opposition to lord North's government. On the 30th of April following, lord North himself, in consequence also of intelligence lately received, moved for the appointment of a secret committee, "to inquire into the causes of the war that now subsists in the Carnatic, and of the present condition of the British possessions in those parts, and to report the same to the house, with their observations thereupon:" of this committee Mr. Dundas was chairman, and all its members were friends of administration. Both these committees continued to sit through the remainder of that session, and the whole of the two sessions which began in November 1781, and December 1782*. During this long period, they carried on their inquiries with the utmost zeal and diligence; their respective chairmen making, from time to time, elaborate and circumstantial reports to the house, and moving a great variety of resolutions†, which gave rise to several debates. As

* The select committee was revived upon a motion of Mr. Fox's, November 12, 1783. The secret committee had finished their inquiries.

† Mr. Dundas moved 111 resolutions and general Smith 10. Mr. Dundas acknowledged, in the handsomest terms, that in drawing up the reports of the

Mr. Pitt was not a member of either of these committees, and took no part in the debates immediately consequent upon their proceedings, I shall only observe, that the reports, which were drawn up with great ability and precision, contained a prodigious mass* of authentic, important, and interesting information, relative to the transactions and concerns of the company, both at home and abroad; from which it appeared, that the distressed state of their finances, the critical situation of their territorial acquisitions, the mal-practices of some, and the unwise conduct of others, who had been invested with authority in India, and the want of power to punish past, or guard against future abuses, demanded both immediate relief, and a general reform in the present system. The orders of the court of directors had been disobeyed, and the resolutions of the house of commons disregarded; and therefore it was universally agreed, that nothing but an act of the legislature, with suitable provisions, could prevent the ruin of the company, or the loss of our settlements in India.

Though such was the opinion of every party, and of every individual, the successive ministers had been so occupied by the business of the war, and the negotiations for peace, with other pressing matters, that they had not found leisure to enter fully and effectually into this extensive and difficult subject; but in April 1783, Mr. Dundas, who was unconnected with the persons then in office, thought it incumbent upon him, after the opinions he had delivered, and the pledges he had

secret committee, and in preparing the resolutions which he moved, he had been greatly assisted by Mr. Thomas Orde, afterwards lord Bolton.

* They fill several folio volumes.

given, to introduce "A bill for the better regulation and government of the British possessions in India, and for the security and preservation thereof." Its principal provisions were, to appoint a secretary of state for Indian affairs, to recall Mr. Hastings, the governor general, to give extensive powers to his successor, and to secure to the zemindars or landholders of Hindostan, a permanent interest in their respective tenures. He intimated, that lord Cornwallis was the most proper person to succeed Mr. Hastings, but he did not require, that his appointment should be inserted in the bill. Ministers, however, having announced their determination to oppose some of its clauses, Mr. Dundas did not attempt to carry it through the house. And it being understood that administration had no measure of their own to propose, the chairman of the East India company, not long before the prorogation, moved for leave to bring in a bill, as a temporary expedient, the objects of which were, to suspend the payment of a large sum, about a million, due from the company for custom duties, to authorize a dividend of 4*l.* per cent to the proprietors, at midsummer 1783, and to enable the company to borrow 300,000*l.* for present exigencies. This motion was seconded by lord John Cavendish, who promised his assistance to the measure, upon the ground of the necessity of supporting the credit of the company, with whose interests those of the public were intimately connected. This bill, which passed without any difficulty, afforded Mr. Fox an opportunity of declaring his intention to bring forward the consideration of the affairs of India, early in the next session; and we have seen that the king's speech mentioned the situation of the East India

company, as one of the reasons for calling parliament together before Christmas, which had not been usual in time of peace.

On the 18th of November, Mr. Fox, conformably to the notice he had given, opened his plan relative to Indian affairs, which produced such important consequences. He began his speech, by stating the urgent necessity of a radical change in the mode of managing our Indian concerns; and he proceeded to explain the particulars of the plan, which he wished to submit to the house, as the only means of extricating the company from their present pecuniary distress, and of securing our valuable territories in the east. He proposed to establish in London a board of seven commissioners, who should have full power to conduct and manage all the affairs of the company, civil, military, and commercial, with authority to take possession of all charters, papers, books, vessels, warehouses, goods, money, and every species of property belonging to the company; and to suspend, remove, and appoint all officers and servants, of every description, employed by them, both in Europe and Asia; and that under these commissioners, and subject to their control, there should be eight persons, each possessing India stock to the amount of 2,000*l.* who should act as their assistants, and whose peculiar duty it should be to superintend and regulate all matters connected with the trade of the company. He farther proposed, that in the first instance, both the seven commissioners, and their eight assistants, should be appointed by parliament, and that their power should continue for a limited time, three or five years; that any of the seven commissioners should be removable by the king, upon a vote of either house of parliament, and that any

of the eight assistants should be removable by five of the seven commissioners; that any vacancy, which might happen among the commissioners, should be filled up by the king, and among the assistants, by the court of proprietors; that provision should be made, under the direction of the commissioners, for the punishment of all offences committed by the company's servants in India, whether in their conduct towards the native princes, or in the internal management of the company's affairs; that an exact account of the mercantile transactions of the company should be laid before the court of proprietors, every half year; and that an account of all the proceedings, both of the commissioners at home, and of their servants abroad, should be laid before the board of treasury, previous to the commencement of every session of parliament, for the purpose of its being submitted to both houses. This was to be the substance of one bill; and he announced his intention of introducing a second bill, for preventing all ambitious projects for the extension of our territorial possessions in India; for securing to landholders both the enjoyment and inheritance of their property; for prohibiting the servants of the company from receiving presents from the native powers and zemindars, or oppressing them by increase of rent or tribute; for abolishing monopolies; and for explaining the powers granted by the act of 1773, to the council general in Bengal, over the other presidencies, in matters relating to war, peace, and treaties. Having explained the substance of his two intended bills, Mr. Fox again urged the plea of necessity, as the ground of what he acknowledged to be "a strong measure," and said, he was aware, that in proposing it, "he ran a considerable

risque, that he put his situation as a minister to the hazard." From these and other similar expressions, it was evident that he had some misgiving in his own mind, concerning the reception his plan might experience, and the effect it might have upon himself and his character. Towards the end of his speech he alluded to his coalition with lord North, in a manner which marked a consciousness of its unpopularity; he lamented the absence of his noble colleague on account of indisposition, and regretted the want of his assistance in the arduous task of the day; but he was happy to be able to assure the house, that he and the noble lord perfectly coincided in sentiment and opinion upon the subject; and he trusted that, as the bill would be some time in its progress, he should still have the benefit of the noble lord's powerful support. He concluded by moving, "That leave be given to bring in a bill for vesting the affairs of the East India company in the hands of certain commissioners, for the benefit of the proprietors and the public."

Mr. Pitt instantly saw the serious objections to which the proposed plan was liable, although the nature of it had been studiously concealed, till disclosed that day by Mr. Fox; and rising immediately after colonel North had seconded the motion, he said, that when the bill came before the house, he should examine its provisions with the accuracy and care which they demanded. He admitted, what had been so eloquently stated by the right honorable gentleman, that great and enormous abuses had taken place in the management of our Indian concerns; and great indeed he thought they must be, to warrant a measure, which he would be bold to declare, was a direct violation of the principles of the constitution, and an

entire abrogation of all the antient charters and privileges, by which the company had been first established, and had since existed. He the more particularly urged the attention of the house to the plan, which they had just heard, as the right honorable mover had not introduced it with any satisfactory reasons for instituting a board with powers of so extraordinary and alarming a nature. It was true, the bill was said to be founded on necessity. But what was this? Was it not necessity that had always been the plea of every illegal exertion of power, or exercise of oppression? Was not necessity the pretence of every usurpation? of every infringement of human freedom? Necessity was the argument of tyrants; it was the creed of slaves. No advantage had been stated as likely to result from yielding to this necessity, except that of destroying the corrupt influence, which had been exerted by the company and their servants, in the two houses of parliament; but he contended, that if the source of this influence should be possessed by the same commissioners, who were to have the sole direction and command of every part of Indian affairs, the minister himself, who was, in fact, to nominate these commissioners, would not only be the governor of India, but enjoy the power and patronage, which, it was pretended, this bill was chiefly designed to eradicate. Under this idea, he again most earnestly recommended, that the bill might remain on the table so long as to enable every member of the house to form an adequate opinion of the necessity of the measure, and of the tendency of its principle.

In speaking of the second bill, Mr. Pitt said, that the right honorable gentleman had his sincere thanks and applause for

the manner in which he proposed to give security, stability, and permanency to the property of the antient inhabitants in our Indian territories: but while he paid this deserved tribute to his intentions towards the natives in our eastern possessions, which he joined the warm and animated feeling of the whole house, in acknowledging to be characteristic of English liberality, he hoped never to see them carried into effect, if the adoption of them must be attended with the absolute loss of our own most valuable privileges. The right honorable secretary was willing to secure to the Gentoos their natural rights; but let him take care that in doing so, he did not destroy the liberties of Britons: while he provided for the protection and safety of our subjects abroad, let him shew some consideration for the chartered rights of our countrymen at home. He concluded, with expressing a wish, that the second reading of the first bill should not take place without a call of the house, for he was assured, that not a single member, when he heard of it, would consider himself uninterested in its fate. Several members spoke after Mr. Pitt; and Mr. Fox then gave notice, that he should move the second reading of the first bill on the 27th; Mr. Pitt requested the delay of a few days, that there might be time for a call of the house; but Mr. Fox would not consent. Leave was given to Mr. Fox, to bring in both bills; and the call of the house on the motion of Mr. Pitt, was fixed for the 3rd of December, the earliest day on which it could with any propriety take place.

This plan strongly marked the bold and ambitious character of its author. We have seen, that Mr. Fox admitted the risque he incurred by the proposal; and it was generally believed,

that more than one of his friends endeavored to dissuade him from so hazardous an attempt*; but he refused to listen to their advice, being convinced, that the plan, if it succeeded, would probably establish him in office for life; and foreseeing, if it failed, no other bad consequence than the end of his administration, the continuance of which, under present circumstances, he well knew to be extremely precarious. Such appears to have been the ground of Mr. Fox's conduct, in bringing forward a measure, which would have effected a material change in the constitution, by the creation of a new independent power, greater than that of the king. The appointment to all the offices of the company at home, and to the governments and other lucrative situations, of every description, in India; the disposal of the military commands and commissions in the armies of that immense empire; the annual nomination of cadets and writers to the different settlements; the power of protecting those who returned to England, with fortunes acquired by means which could not bear a strict examination†; the purchase of merchandize and stores, to the amount of five or six millions a year; the taking up of ships, and the contracts for freight—these and various other means of favor, and sources of patronage, connected with such nume-

* It was confidently said, that Mr. Fox consulted the earl of Mansfield, chief justice of the king's bench, and at that time acting as speaker of the house of lords, who expressed himself decidedly against the measure; which is the more likely to be true, as his lordship and his nephew lord Stormont, then president of the council, both voted for the rejection of the bill.

† In one of the debates upon this bill, Mr. Burke represented the power of protecting those who returned from India "loaded with odium and with riches," as a source of influence far greater than the nomination to office.

rous establishments, such extensive trade, so large a dominion, and so ample a revenue, must have constituted a degree of influence, which, when opposed to ministers, might have impeded the necessary functions of executive government; and when friendly, might have enabled them to carry any measures, however injurious to the liberties of the people, or to the prerogative of the crown.

In support of what has been now asserted, relative to the formidable extent of Indian patronage, I must observe, that it is stated in one of the reports of the select committee, which were drawn up by the friends of Mr. Fox, and were appealed to as the ground and justification of this plan, that "the East India company is in possession of a vast empire, with a boundless patronage, civil, military, marine, commercial, and financial; in every department of which, such fortunes have been made, as could be made no where else." Mr. Fox's own authority may also be quoted upon this subject: in April of the preceding year, when he was secretary of state, he said, (in the house of commons,) that "he could not, consistently with his regard for the constitution of the country, approve the taking away from the East India company, and placing under the direction of the crown, the entire management of our territorial possessions in the east: this would afford to government such ample means of corruption and undue influence, as might, in the end, overthrow the whole constitution, and deprive us of our best and dearest rights; on which account, he thought it would be more prudent to leave to the company the appointment of its own servants." It should be remembered, that the patronage, from which he then apprehended

CHAP. III. 1783. such mischievous consequences, if placed in the crown, was confined to the territorial possessions of the company; whereas he now proposed to give to the commissioners recommended by himself, not only that patronage, but also the additional appointment to all the offices and employments connected with the trade, and every other concern of the company, both at home and in India. And on the very day he moved for leave to bring in this bill, he said, that the influence of the crown had been diminished: but, added he, "the influence of the crown, in its most enormous and alarming state, was nothing compared to the boundless patronage of the East India government, if the latter was to be used in the influence of this house." Could there be a stronger condemnation of the plan, than this acknowledgment by its author? It was impossible for any one to doubt, how patronage would be used, when placed at the command of seven political men, six of whom, as will hereafter be seen, were members of the house of commons, and the seventh a member of the house of lords; all nominated by a person, whose avowed principle it was, as well as that of those with whom he was more immediately connected, that England ought to be governed by a party. This measure was the legitimate offspring of such a principle, operating upon a mind, conscious of possessing neither the favor of the king, nor the confidence of the people, and determined upon acquiring power in defiance of both.

The true idea, therefore, of this plan, is, that it was intended, not to add to the power of the king's government in general, but to give such a degree of strength to the present ministers, as to ensure their continuance in office; or, if they should be

compelled to resign, to render them so powerful, by the patronage which they would retain when out of office, that no future administration could long resist their opposition; more especially, as it was understood, that Mr. Fox had it in contemplation still farther to diminish the influence of the crown.

In addition to this fundamental objection, resting upon the essential principles of the British constitution, it is to be remarked, that this plan would have caused a total and complete revolution in our whole Indian system, both with respect to commerce and territorial government. It would also have violated private property, by taking away from the stock-holders, those rights, which they purchased with their stock; and it would have abrogated the charters of the East India company*, by annihilating the court of directors, and by depriving the court of proprietors of every part of their real power. Such an invasion of private property and public charters, could not have taken place, without affecting, if not in its immediate, at least in its remote, consequences, in its principle, and by analogy, every class and every individual of the community. Nor is this all: the commissioners, being invested with the whole political authority in India, might, designedly or accidentally, have pursued a line of conduct directly opposite to that of the king's government; nay, they might have involved this country in war with France or Holland,

* Mr. Lee, the attorney general, when alluding to the alleged infraction of the company's charter, said, "A charter is nothing more than a piece of parchment, with a bit of wax dangling to it." This unguarded expression had great effect in the country.

CHAP. III. 1783. on account of their eastern possessions, and in consequence of that connexion which must necessarily subsist between European and Indian politics, without even the privity of his majesty's ministers, with whom they were not bound to keep up any communication, except by delivering an annual statement of their proceedings. An imperium in imperio would therefore have been established, of the worst and most dangerous kind; and that unity of action would have been destroyed, which is essential to the peace and good government of every nation.

The guards proposed by Mr. Fox, against the evils to be apprehended from this bill, were not such as were likely to have any considerable effect. The appointment of the commissioners by parliament, was in reality, (as was observed by Mr. Pitt,) leaving them to be nominated by Mr. Fox. It is true, the commission was to continue only for a limited time, four years as ultimately settled; but there was every reason to believe, that this enormous patronage would have prevented a change of ministers within any such period; and in that case, a renewal of the commission would have been easily obtained. The power of removing a commissioner, by a vote of either house of parliament, would have been nugatory, as parliamentary interposition would not have been justified, except in cases of gross and palpable misconduct, which the commissioners might have contrived to avoid, even while they secretly exerted the most mischievous influence. The appointment of a new commissioner by the king, in case of a vacancy by death or otherwise, would have been equally unavailing; since, if the present ministers were in office, one of their own

friends would succeed; and if there were an adverse administration, the new commissioner would have but little weight against the other six remaining members of the board.

Mr. Fox affirmed, that this bill created no new power, but merely gave to a board of commissioners that power, which had been hitherto possessed by the company. But it was justly observed, that it was a transfer of power from a body of men, not politicians, numerous and fluctuating, by whom the boundless patronage of India was divided into a thousand little wandering streams, which being now collected into a single channel, would be poured, like an irresistible flood, upon this country, and sweep away its liberties—it was a transfer from a large unconnected body, into the hands of a small junto, politically connected, independent of the crown, by whom India would be converted into one vast political engine, to be levelled, as the party might choose, either against the prerogatives of the sovereign, or the independence of parliament.

As to the plea of necessity, so confidently urged against every objection, it may be remarked, that although it was universally admitted, that some change in our Indian system was indispensable, yet it by no means followed, that nothing short of the violent and unconstitutional plan, proposed by Mr. Fox, could restore the credit of the company at home, and provide for the future good government of India. The unqualified statement of the pecuniary distress of the company, and the pathetic description of the abuses committed in India, were no vindication of this specific plan. Whether the plan in question would have relieved that distress, or have

CHAP III. 1783.

corrected those abuses, may be matter of doubt; but it was afterwards proved by fact, that those important purposes might be completely obtained, without any material infringement of the chartered rights of the East India company, or any the slightest danger to the constitution of the country. I have said, material infringement, because, without some diminution of the rights and privileges of the company, and taking from the directors that part of their power, which they had proved themselves incapable of exercising properly and advantageously, it was impossible to establish the reform, either at home or in India, which all acknowledged to be necessary. The power, thus taken away, must be vested somewhere; the grand object, which was so happily accomplished by Mr. Pitt in the following year, being to place it, where it should be effective, and at the same time not operate in a manner injurious to any branch of our government.

HAVING made these observations upon the principle and tendency of this ever memorable bill, I proceed to give an account of its progress through one house of parliament, and of its rejection by the other. It was presented to the house of commons on the 20th of November, read a first time, and ordered to be printed. Mr. Fox then moved, that it should be read a second time, on that day se'nnight. Mr. William Grenville* immediately remonstrated against this short interval between the first and second reading; and took this opportunity of stating his objections to the measure, in strong and personal terms. He said, that it aimed at nothing less than to

* Now lord Grenville.

erect a despotic system, which might crush the free constitution of England. It was true, that India wanted a reform, but not such a reform as this—it wanted a constitutional alteration, not a tyrannical one. This bill violated every rule of British justice, broke through all those ties, which should bind man to man; was fraught with most pointed mischief to national honor and English legislation; and was an attack upon the most solemn charters, confirmed by the sacred faith of parliament. He contended, that if the charter of the East India company might be thus totally annihilated, the charter of the bank, which rested upon the same authority, might also be seized; and if the property of the East India stockholders might be thus invaded, there was an end of security to every species of private property. Less violent methods than this would surely have been found, if there was not at the bottom some deep, some latent, some dreadful purpose, of which this was the forerunner. He represented the measure as in reality designed and calculated to lift Mr. Fox into a situation wholly unknown to our constitution; a situation from which he could not be driven or moved, till he chose voluntarily to abdicate his dictatorship; at the same time declaring, that he had such an opinion of the daring ambition of the honorable gentleman, as to feel confident, that having once possessed himself of such inordinate power, he would never condescend to lay it down, and become once more an humble individual. The seven commissioners, although ostensibly chosen by parliament, would in fact be his nominees, his creatures, and dependants, who would direct the wealth and patronage of India to the support of his administration, and in return, look to him for

CHAP. III. 1783.

the renewal of their lease of power. Well, then, might the independent members of that house be afraid, lest the united factions, now armed with the influence of the crown, should, if fortified with this additional strength, perpetuate their authority, and render it irresistible. He read the protests from the journals of the house of lords in 1773 and 1780, signed by the duke of Portland, the present first lord of the treasury, by lord Fitzwilliam, who was to be at the head of this new commission, and by the late lord Rockingham, whom Mr. Fox professed to consider as his political guide*, in which, principles were maintained directly contrary to those of this bill. Having observed, that this scheme was planned by the man, whose voice had been loudest in sounding the alarm of danger to the liberties of the country, he concluded, with comparing the haste with which Mr. Fox and his friends were endeavoring to carry this bill through parliament, to the precipitancy and ardor of plunderers, eager to grasp at and hold fast their prey. Mr. Fox's motion, although objected to by Mr. Pitt and several other members, was carried without a division.

On the 24th, the chairman of the India company presented a petition to the house of commons, from the East India proprietors, against the bill, setting forth, "that the said bill destroys the continuation of, and wholly subverts, the rights and privileges, granted to the petitioners by charter, made for valuable considerations, and confirmed by divers acts of

* In a subsequent debate upon this bill, Mr. Fox said, that he was one of those, who had suffered a sort of political martyrdom in the cause of lord Rockingham's principles, of those who had surrendered pomp and power, rather than remain where the principles of that noble lord ceased to be fashionable, and were withering into contempt.

parliament; and that the said bill operates to the total confiscation of the property of the petitioners, by empowering certain commissioners to be therein named, to seize and take possession of all the lands, tenements, houses, warehouses, and other buildings, books, records, charters, letters, and other papers, ships, vessels, goods, wares, merchandizes, money, securities for money, and other effects belonging to the petitioners, and to order and dispose thereof at their will and pleasure; and this, without charging the petitioners with any specific delinquency, or stating any just ground by which the petitioners rights and privileges ought to be forfeited, or their property to be seized; a proceeding contrary to the most sacred privilege of British subjects—that of being tried and convicted upon a specific charge, before judgment is passed against them, in any case whatever: And therefore praying, that the acts of delinquency, which can be alleged against the petitioners, or other just grounds, if any, for subverting the petitioners constitution, and divesting them of their rights and privileges, and seizing their property, by a measure so alarming, and in a manner so extraordinary, may be stated in writing; and that the petitioners may be allowed a reasonable time to answer the same, and make their defence thereon; and that the petitioners may be heard, by themselves or their counsel, against the said bill."

On the following day the chairman presented a similar petition from the directors of the East India company, complaining, upon the same grounds, of the injury intended to be done to them; and further representing, that since the 18th of November, "a general alarm and apprehension of the

CHAP. III. 1783.

desperate state of the company's affairs had gone forth." They therefore intreated, that a public examination might be made into the true state of the circumstances of the company, in which they hoped to prove, that with a temporary and moderate relief from parliament, their credit could not fail to be firmly established. These two petitions were received; and leave was given, that the petitioners should be respectively heard by their counsel, upon the second reading of the bill.

On the 26th, Mr. Fox brought in his second bill, the title of of which was, "A bill for the better government of the territories, possessions, and dependencies in India." The speaker read the breviate of it, which occupied a considerable time, the clauses being very numerous. Mr. Pitt observed, that it was not possible to form a just judgment of a bill of such length, from the cursory manner in which it had been read. He declared; however, that at present he saw no objection to its principle, and that he was willing it should go to a committee; but he did not pledge himself to support it, wishing to have time to consider it more fully. Mr. Fox, in answer to a remark from Mr. Arden*, said, that this second bill was not necessarily dependent upon his other bill, although at present in some of its clauses, it referred to it; and that it might, by some slight alterations in the committee, be made complete and efficient, even if the first bill should fail, and in whomsoever the management of East India affairs at home should be vested.

* An early friend of Mr. Pitt, who had been solicitor general in lord Shelburne's administration. He was afterwards successively attorney general, master of the rolls, and chief justice of the common pleas. When he accepted the last of those situations he was created lord Alvanley.

It was then ordered, that the bill now presented, should be read a second time on the following Tuesday*.

On the 27th, the day fixed for the second reading of Mr. Fox's bill, for vesting the affairs of the East India company in the hands of commissioners, counsel were heard, and witnesses examined in support of the petitions from the proprietors, and from the directors of the company. The counsel who spoke first, delivered to the house, two papers of accounts; one of which contained a statement of the debts and property of the company; and the other, an estimate of the expected receipts and payments to March 1786. The object of these papers, which were authenticated by the accountant and auditor of the company, was, to inform the house of commons of the real state of the finances of the company, in opposition to Mr. Fox's representation on a former night. After the counsel had finished, a short conversation took place upon a point of order; and when that was settled, Mr. Fox, in an elaborate speech, objected to many of the articles in the papers, delivered that day from the East India company; and endeavored to prove the result of the statement and estimate to be erroneous, to a large amount. After a variety of other arguments in support of the bill, he concluded by moving, that it be committed.

Mr. Pitt began his answer to this speech, by mentioning the peculiar situation in which he found himself placed, by the progress and present state of this question. He said, that from the commencement of it, he had, by every exertion in his power, called the attention of the house, and of the country in

* The house did not sit on that day, on account of a very late debate on the preceding day, and this bill made no farther progress.

CHAP. III. 1783.

general, to the importance and dangerous consequences of the measure proposed. He had pledged himself to point out the dreadful tendency of this bill, with respect to every thing dear and sacred to Englishmen; to prove its inimical influence on the constitution and liberties of the country; and to expose, by undeniable evidence, the false and pernicious principles on which it was founded. These particulars required time and deliberation, which the violent and indecent precipitancy of this business virtually proscribed. However, it was impossible to regard the very face of the bill, without feeling strong repugnance to its success. He desired the house to take notice, that the ground of necessity, upon which the bill had been originally declared to be introduced, was now changed: that necessity no longer rested on the simple, clear, and obvious proposition, the bankruptcy of the company, but was that day placed on a still weaker foundation; a foundation infinitely more fallacious—upon the temporary distress of the company. Was that a fit plea to warrant the passing of a bill, which openly professed a daring violation of the chartered rights of the company, and proceeded to an immediate confiscation of all their property? Ought the house to be satisfied with such a plea, even if proved beyond the possibility of doubt? He trusted they would not; he trusted the house had too much regard for their own honor and dignity, too scrupulous an attention to justice, and too conscientious an adherence to their duty to their constituents, to support the minister in one of the boldest, most unprecedented, most desperate, and most alarming attempts at the exercise of tyranny, which ever disgraced the annals of this or of any other country. The right

honorable gentleman, whose eloquence and whose abilities would lend a grace to deformity, had appealed to their passions, and pressed home to their hearts, the calamitous situation of the unhappy natives of India, a situation, which every man must deeply deplore, and anxiously wish to relieve. But ought the right honorable gentleman to provide for the protection of the oppressed abroad, by enforcing the most unparalleled oppression at home? Was the relief to be administered in Asia, to be grounded on violence and injustice in Europe? Let the house turn their eyes to the very extraordinary manner in which the very extraordinary bill, then under consideration, had been introduced. When the right honorable gentleman opened his plan to the house, he urged the indispensable necessity of the measure, as its only justification; and in order to carry that necessity to the conviction of the house, he gave such a statement of the company's affairs, as to convey to the mind of almost every gentleman present, that the company was insolvent to the amount of eight millions. Mr. Fox appearing to dissent from this, Mr. Pitt said, "I am ready to admit, that the right honorable gentleman did not expressly say this; but still I contend, that the manner in which he stated the affairs of the company, conveyed that idea. It has been entertained by most of those who heard him; it has been entertained by the public; and it has been entertained by the company. The right honorable gentleman has himself since confessed, that he made several omissions in his former statement of the company's affairs—omissions he certainly did make—omissions, gross, palpable, and prodigious. What was the consequence? The company flatly deny the right honorable gentleman's statement.

CHAP. III. 1783.

They prepare an account of the true state of their affairs; they produce it at the bar of the house; they establish its authenticity, by the concurrent testimony of their accountant and auditor. What happens then? The right honorable gentleman declares it incumbent on him to clear his own character; and that can only be done by refuting and falsifying the company's statement of their affairs, to the enormous amount of twelve millions. Arduous and difficult as this task was, the right honorable gentleman entered upon it with a degree of spirit peculiar to the boldness of his character, running through the account with a volubility, which rendered comprehension difficult, and detection almost impossible. I have attempted to follow him through his commentary; and though it is impracticable, upon first hearing such a variety of assertions and calculations, to investigate the accuracy of all of them, and completely expose their fallacy; yet I will undertake to shew, that the right honorable gentleman has reasoned unfairly upon some of the articles, grossly misrepresented others, and wholly passed by considerations material to be adverted to, in order to ascertain the true state of the company's affairs." Mr. Pitt then went into a minute examination of the finances of the company; and after going through all Mr. Fox's observations, and objections to the papers which had been that day presented, he affirmed, that the company, though at present under pecuniary embarrassment, was by no means insolvent; and that the petitioners ought to be allowed an opportunity of proving the whole of the statement of their affairs, at the bar of the house. The right honorable secretary, he said, had accused the company of temerity, in bringing their accounts before the

house, in a state exceedingly fallacious. He (Mr. Fox) had asked, what indignation and censure would have been due to the individual, who should have dared thus to trifle with truth, with decency, and with the dignity of the house? What then should be said of a minister, who had ventured to rise up in his place, and impose on the house, a statement every way absurd and erroneous? On these and many other accounts, Mr. Pitt considered it perfectly reasonable, that the debate should be deferred, at least for a single day, to allow the house time to inquire into and examine the truth of the papers just presented, the falsehood of which, communicated, as they had been, from high authority, ought not to be taken for granted, upon the bare assertion of the secretary of state; and therefore reserving for the present his sentiments upon the principle of the bill, he moved that the debate be adjourned till to-morrow. This motion, after a long discussion, was rejected by a majority of 229 to 120.

On the 1st of December, the day fixed for the bill going into a committee, upon the question being put for the speaker leaving the chair, Mr. Powys rose, and condemned the measure, as rash, despotic, and dangerous to the constitution: he expressed great respect for Mr. Fox's talents; but he wished to see him the servant of his sovereign, and not his master. At the conclusion of his speech, he declared, in the most solemn manner, that whatever was dear to Englishmen, or valuable to that house, depended upon the issue of their present deliberations; and that the passing of the bill would consign the constitution, the liberties, the glory, and the dignity of the British empire to ultimate and certain ruin.

CHAP. III. 1783.

The bill was defended by Mr. Fox and Mr. Burke, and opposed by Mr. Pitt and Mr. Dundas. The arguments, in its support, rested chiefly upon the gross abuses committed in India, and the utter incapacity of the directors to manage so important and complicated a concern. On the other hand, it was contended, that though a change of system, under the authority of parliament, was unquestionably necessary, an effectual plan for the future government of India might be devised, without a total abolition of the company's charter, or creating a power inconsistent with the principles of our constitution. A division took place at half-past four in the morning, and the motion for the speaker's leaving the chair, was carried by a majority of 217 to 103, which was a decided approbation of the principle of the bill. As, however, it was so late, the house went into a committee only *pro forma*, and it was agreed that the committee should sit again on the 3d.

On that day, the house resolved itself into a committee, without any previous debate, and there was a discussion upon several of the clauses, in which Mr. Pitt took no part. It was agreed that the name, commissioners, to which some objection was made, should be changed for that of directors; that the seven directors should be, earl Fitzwilliam, who was to be chairman, Mr. Frederick Montague, who was to be deputy chairman, lord viscount Lewisham, colonel North, sir Gilbert Elliott, sir Henry Fletcher, and Mr. Gregory *; that the directors should not be disqualified from sitting in parliament, but that they should be incapable of holding any office of

* The two last were directors of the East India company, but members of the house of commons, closely connected in politics with the ministers.

profit under the crown during pleasure; that there should be nine, instead of eight assistants *; that these nine assistants, who were all named in the committee, should have a salary of 500*l.* a year each, paid by the East India company; and that the commission should continue four years. Upon these, and other points of less importance, which it was necessary to settle, there was very little difference of opinion, and no division. It was left undetermined, whether the seven directors should receive any pecuniary emolument, but Mr. Fox gave his decided opinion, that they ought to have a fixed salary paid by the public; nor was it now determined, whether the nine assistants should be capable of sitting in the house of commons. Mr. Fox, at present, saw no sufficient reason for excluding them; but he was willing to postpone that question, till the report should be considered, when he promised to listen to any arguments which might be urged against it, and to act according to his conviction. The committee having gone through the bill, the report was immediately received, and the bill, with its amendments, ordered to be printed. When the report was taken into consideration on Friday, it was determined, after a short debate, that the nine assistants should not be allowed to sit in the house of commons. Several new clauses of inferior moment were added, without any division. Mr. Pitt's objection being to the general principle of the bill, he did not think it necessary to take any part in the discussions upon the provisions of the particular clauses; considering it of very little importance in what manner they

* The reason of this increase was, that there might be three committees at the same time, each consisting of three persons.

CHAP. III. 1783.

were settled, and being convinced, that no alteration in the committee could reconcile him to the measure.

The motion for the third reading, on Monday the 8th, was carried, after a long and warm debate, by a majority of 208 to 102. A few alterations of a trifling nature were then made, and the bill passed.

In order, in some degree, to account for the little resistance, in point of numbers, which this bill met with in the house of commons, it may be observed, that lord North and Mr. Fox, who were at present united in government, had been for many years the two principal persons on opposite sides of the house. Lord North, in the course of a long administration, had conferred favors upon many of the members, and Mr. Fox was now the efficient head of a numerous party; besides which, they were both men to whom their personal acquaintance and connections were warmly attached. To these circumstances, and to the persuasion, that the patronage of India would render the present ministers irresistible, are to be attributed those large majorities, by which this bill was uniformly supported in its progress through the house of commons. And to account for the little interest, which a bill, afterwards so unpopular, at first excited in the public mind*, it must be considered, that its provisions were novel in their nature, and its real tendency not immediately discerned by

* Only two petitions, besides those from the proprietors and directors of the East India company, were presented against the bill, in its progress through the house of commons; one from the city of London, and the other from the borough of High Wycombe, which latter was not presented till the day on which the bill passed.

the community at large; and the rapidity with which it was carried through the house of commons, in defiance of every remonstrance upon the subject, did not allow time for the public opinion to operate*. The people were slow to believe, that a measure, so objectionable as this was represented to be by its opponents, could be brought forward by a man, who had always professed himself the champion of the British constitution, and the guardian of the rights and privileges of every description of British subjects. It was evident, however, that a sufficient impression was already made in the country, to render it probable, that the bill would have greater difficulties to encounter in the other house of parliament, than it experienced in the house of commons.

On the 9th of December, the bill was carried up to the house of lords by Mr. Fox, who was, upon that occasion, attended by a great number of members of the house of commons; and the duke of Portland immediately moved, that it should be read a second time on Monday next (the 15th,) to which no objection was made. A conversation followed, begun by lord Temple, requesting a farther production of papers, to which the duke of Portland refused his consent; and lord Temple acquiesced, without dividing the house. Lord Temple, lord Thurlow, and the duke of Richmond, spoke several times, and expressed themselves in strong terms against the bill. Lord Thurlow, in his first speech, called it "a most atrocious violation of private property, a daring invasion of chartered rights, and a direct subversion of the first principles of the

* The bill was presented to the house of commons, on the 20th of November, and it passed that house on the 8th of December.

CHAP. III. 1783.

British government, for the purpose of establishing, upon groundless pretences, an enormous and unconstitutional influence in the hands of the present minister;" and afterwards, in replying to lord Loughborough, who defended the measure, he said, "The present bill means evidently to create a power unknown to the constitution, an imperium in imperio; but as I abhor tyranny in all its shapes, I shall oppose, most strenuously, this strange attempt to destroy the true balance of our constitution. The present bill does not tend to increase the influence of the crown, but it tends to set up a power in the kingdom, which may be used in opposition to the crown, and for the destruction of the liberties of the people. I wish to see the crown great and respectable; but if the present bill should pass, it will be no longer worthy of a man of honor to wear*. The king will, in fact, take the diadem from his own head, and place it on the head of Mr. Fox." The conversation ended with lord Temple's presenting a petition from the East India company, stating objections to the bill; and praying that they might be heard by counsel against it. It was agreed, that counsel should be heard, upon the second reading of the bill; and the house adjourned.

In the intermediate time, several corporate bodies presented petitions to the house of lords, against the bill; conceiving, that their own charters were endangered by this attack upon the charter of the East India company.

On the 15th of December, the day fixed for hearing counsel, and for the second reading of the bill, the duke of Richmond

* When lord Thurlow pronounced these words, he looked at the prince of Wales, who was present, and was known to be friendly to the measure.

presented a petition from the city of London, against the bill; and, upon the duke of Manchester's objecting to some expressions in the petition, the duke of Richmond observed, that this petition was drawn up in the very words of a famous protest against an India bill, which passed in 1773, and which protest was signed by the duke of Portland, lord Fitzwilliam, and several other lords, who were present and known to be friendly to the bill now before the house, although interfering in a far greater degree with the privileges of the company, than that against which they had then protested. This observation prevented any farther objection, and the petition was received. Counsel were then called in; and after a speech from one of them, relative to the rights, and the present state, of the East India company, and the national advantages derived from its trade and territorial acquisitions, they proceeded to examine witnesses, and to produce written documents in support of the allegations which had been made. This examination, with some interruption, continued to a late hour, when the counsel represented, that they were not prepared to proceed any farther at present, as some of their witnesses, whom they had not examined, had left the house, and they had omitted to bring some books, which they wished to submit to the inspection of their lordships; and therefore they requested the indulgence of the house to allow the business to be postponed to the next day. To this lord Carlisle objected; but the duke of Chandos, who was unfriendly to the bill, thought the request a very reasonable one, and accordingly moved, that the farther hearing of counsel be adjourned to the next day. Late as it was, a debate ensued; and the duke of Portland, in speaking against the motion,

CHAP. III. 1783.

alluded to a rumor, which had been in circulation several days, that lord Temple had had an audience of the king, and was authorized to declare, that his majesty was hostile to Mr. Fox's India bill. The duke asserted, that every attempt to influence the votes of the members of either house, upon a bill depending in parliament, was a violation of the constitution.

Lord Temple acknowledged, that he had been admitted to an audience of the king; and contended, that as a peer of the realm, he had a constitutional right to offer his majesty such advice as he might think proper: he had, he said, given his advice; what that advice was, he would not then say: it was lodged in the breast of the king: nor would he declare the purport of it, without his majesty's consent, or till he saw a proper occasion. But though he would not declare affirmatively, what his advice to his sovereign was, he would tell their lordships negatively what it was not—it was not friendly to the principle and objects of the bill. After a warm altercation upon this point, a division took place, in which 87, including proxies, voted for the adjournment, and 79 against it. The house immediately adjourned, the ministers having been left in a minority.

On the 16th, counsel were farther heard; and on the 17th, there was a long debate upon the principle of the bill, in which the arguments for and against it were nearly the same as in the house of commons. The question for committing the bill was negatived by a majority of 19, the numbers being 95 and 76; and the bill was afterwards rejected without a division. The prince of Wales voted in the minority, in the former

night; but this night he did not vote on either side. Lord Stormont, president of the council, and lord Mansfield, speaker of the house of lords, both of whom had, on the 15th, voted against the adjournment, now voted against the commitment of the bill, though they took no part in either debate. It was generally understood, that these two lords had, from the first, declared themselves adverse to the bill; but that notwithstanding this difference of opinion upon so important a measure of government, lord Stormont would have remained in office, if the administration had continued *.

The day Mr. Fox's India bill was rejected in the house of lords, the subject of lord Temple's having had an audience of the king, and being authorized to declare, that his majesty's sentiments and wishes were unfavorable to that measure, was brought forward in the house of commons, with great solemnity. As soon as the speaker had taken the chair, Mr. Baker rose, and observed, that, as he had a matter of the first importance to submit to the consideration of the house, he requested the speaker to issue his orders for the immediate attendance of members. This being agreed to, the serjeant at arms, as is usual upon extraordinary occasions, took the mace, and going into the adjacent rooms, in the speaker's name, commanded the instant attendance of those members whom he found. The house soon became very full; and Mr. Baker rising again, and adverting to the division which had taken place two nights before, in the other house, when ministers were left in

* If the bill had succeeded, a lord chancellor would probably have been appointed, and lord Mansfield would no longer have acted as speaker of the house of lords.

a minority, positively asserted, that several peers were, upon that occasion, influenced by the rumors, which had been some days in circulation, to vote differently from what they had intended. He said, that these rumors were notorious, and affected the personal reputation of the sovereign. He contended, that the use of the king's name, in the manner to which he alluded, was dangerous to the constitution, inasmuch as it was calculated to bias the deliberations of parliament, and to destroy that freedom of debate, and independence of conduct, which were at once the support and the glory of the British government. He therefore considered it his duty to propose the following motion, "That it is now necessary to declare, that to report any opinion, or pretended opinion, of his majesty, upon any bill or other proceeding depending in either house of parliament, with a view to influence the votes of the members, is a high crime and misdemeanor, derogatory to the honor of the crown, a breach of the fundamental privileges of parliament, and subversive of the constitution of the country." Lord Maitland, in seconding the motion, said, that that night might probably determine, whether the country was henceforth to be governed by a public and responsible administration, or by a secret cabal, whom no one knew, or could find, or could charge with any violation of right. Mr. Pitt opposed the motion upon two grounds; that it was the unalienable right of peers, both collectively and individually, to advise his majesty, whenever they thought themselves called upon so to do, by the situation of public affairs; and that it was not suitable to the dignity of the house to found any of its proceedings upon common report, without other authority. He contended, that no fact to justify such

a motion as the present, had been proved or stated. He alluded to a similar influence, meaning that of the prince of Wales, which had been exerted on the opposite side; and to other rumors mischievous in their nature, which had been suffered to circulate without remonstrance or notice. In reply to what had been insinuated concerning secret influence, directed against the measures of government, he said, that when ministers found themselves destitute of that support, which could alone render them efficient in their situation, and constitutionally responsible for their public conduct, it was their duty to retire from his majesty's service. He concluded, with moving the order of the day.

Mr. Fox made a very violent speech upon this occasion; and to persuade the house, that there had been an undue interference, he read the following extract from a letter: "His majesty allowed earl Temple to say, that whoever voted for the India bill, were not only not his friends, but he should consider them as his enemies. And if these words were not strong enough, earl Temple might use whatever he might deem stronger, or more to the purpose." Mr. Fox affirmed, as a proof, that this intimation from his majesty was not without effect, that several peers, particularly mentioning lords of the king's bedchamber, who had given their proxies in favor of the bill, changed them on the same day, after they became acquainted with the king's sentiments. "Were I disposed," continued Mr. Fox, "to treat the matter seriously, the whole compass of language affords no terms sufficiently strong and pointed, to mark the contempt which I feel for their conduct. It is an impudent avowal of political profligacy, as if that

CHAP. III. 1783.

species of profligacy were less infamous than any other. It is not only a degradation of a station, which ought to be occupied only by the highest and most exemplary honor, but forfeits their claim to the characters of gentlemen, and reduces them to a level with the meanest and basest of the species. By what magic, nobility can thus charm vice into virtue, I know not, nor wish I to know; but in any other thing than politics, and among any other men than lords of the bed-chamber, such an instance of the grossest perfidy, would, as it well deserved, be branded with infamy and execration." Mr. Jenkinson and lord Mulgrave replied to Mr. Fox; the latter of whom said, that he "conceived Mr. Fox to be the most dangerous character, that had for a long time appeared in this country." Mr. William Grenville, in a subsequent part of the debate, said, he was authorized to declare, that lord Temple had not made use of the words ascribed to him by Mr. Fox. Mr. Fox admitted, that these might not be the precise words; but he asked, whether Mr. Grenville, or any other person, would answer for the noble lord, that he had not made use of words of the same purport as those which he had mentioned, namely, "words calculated to influence the minds of men, by the use of the royal name." To this, no reply was made. The house divided upon Mr. Pitt's motion, which was lost by a majority of 153 to 80. Mr. Baker's motion was consequently agreed to; and he then moved the following resolution, to which no objection was made, "That the house will, on Monday morning next, resolve itself into a committee of the whole house, to consider of the state of the nation."

After these motions had passed, Mr. Erskine represented to

the house, that it was incumbent upon them, in the present state of political affairs, to guard, as far as they could, against a dissolution of parliament; and he proposed to ground a motion for that purpose, upon the necessity of immediately taking some step with regard to India; and therefore he moved, "that it is necessary to the most essential interests of this kingdom, and peculiarly incumbent on this house, to pursue, with unremitting attention, the consideration of a suitable remedy for the abuses which have prevailed in the government of the British dominions in the East Indies; and that this house will consider as an enemy to his country, any person, who shall presume to advise his majesty to prevent, or in any manner interrupt, the discharge of this important duty." In the debate upon this motion, sir Henry Hoghton acknowledged, that the dissolution of parliament would, in the present circumstances of the country, be an unwise, hasty, and violent measure; but yet, as the power of dissolving parliament was a clear and unquestionable prerogative of the crown, he thought it improper for the house of commons to allude to it in the most transient manner: he therefore moved, that the latter part of the resolution, beginning with these words, "and that this house," should be omitted. This amendment, which was supported by Mr. Pitt, was negatived by a majority of 147 to 73; and the original motion was carried without a division; after which the house adjourned.

THE rejection of Mr. Fox's India bill, by the house of lords, afforded his majesty an opportunity of removing ministers, whom he had been compelled to admit into office, but to

CHAP. III. 1783.

whom he had never given his confidence; and accordingly, late in the evening of the 18th, the two secretaries of state received messages, intimating, that his majesty had no longer any occasion for their services, and requiring that the seals of office should be delivered to him, by the under secretaries of state. The seals were the next day placed in the hands of lord Temple, who took the oaths as secretary of state, and immediately wrote letters of dismissal to the other ministers.

At this important juncture, Mr. Pitt readily accepted from his majesty, the offer of being at the head of the treasury, which he had resolutely declined nine months before. The difference in the situation of the king and of the country, caused this difference in Mr. Pitt's conduct, which was in both instances equally regulated by a sense of public duty. In the former case, he was persuaded, that his acceptance would have been attended with mischievous consequences; but now he saw no other means of averting dangers of the most alarming nature, and of providing a government for India, without violating the principles of the constitution. He therefore felt himself under an indispensable obligation to make the attempt, trusting, that the loyalty and patriotism of the people of England would lead them to support a minister, who stood forward in defence of his sovereign, and of the constitution, against the attacks of men, whose only aim was to secure the continuance of that power, which they had gained by force.

Great clamor being raised against lord Temple, respecting the use of the king's name upon the subject of Mr. Fox's India bill, he thought proper to give back the seals to his majesty on the 22d, three days after he had received them; and the

reason, which he and his friends assigned for this step, was, that he might, in a private capacity, and without the protection of official influence, answer any charge which might be brought against him. Mr. Pitt was convinced of the propriety of lord Temple's resignation, under the present impression of the public mind; but, to be thus suddenly deprived of the assistance of a person, with whom he was nearly connected *, and on whose attachment, principles, and abilities, he had the strongest reason to rely, who was not only to have filled one of the most important offices in the state, but also to have conducted the public business in the house of lords, was matter of serious concern, and occasioned considerable embarrassment. And though the personal objection to lord Temple was removed, by his resignation, yet Mr. Pitt could not then form any judgment as to the extent to which the popular cry, of secret influence, might be carried; nor could he but dread the consequences to the constitution and to the country, if he too, from that, or any other cause, should be under the necessity of yielding, and of leaving Mr. Fox and his party in full and triumphant possession of power. Such, however, was the confidence felt in Mr. Pitt, even at this early period of his life, that his character was not in the slightest degree affected by the clamor, which compelled lord Temple to resign †.

This was the only event, of a public nature, which I ever knew disturb Mr. Pitt's rest, while he continued in good

* Lord Temple's father was brother to Mr. Pitt's mother.

† Lord Temple had never afterwards any office in England. During Mr. Pitt's administration, he was made marquis of Buckingham, and lord lieutenant of Ireland.

CHAP. III. 1783. health. Lord Temple's resignation was determined upon at a late hour in the evening of the 21st; and when I went into Mr. Pitt's bedroom the next morning, he told me, that he had not had a moment's sleep. He expressed great uneasiness at the state of public affairs; at the same time declaring his fixed resolution not to abandon the situation he had undertaken, but to make the best stand in his power, though very doubtful of the result. Some of his confidential friends coming to him soon after he was dressed, he entered, with his usual composure and energy, into the discussion of points, which required immediate decision; all feeling the present moment to be one of peculiar anxiety and difficulty.

Mr. Pitt proceeded to fill up the different offices, in the best manner he could, though not exactly as he wished, and had reason to expect he might have done. Some persons of high rank and consideration, who agreed with him in political principles, without partaking in his firmness of mind, who applauded his conduct, but shrunk from responsibility, refused, in the present discouraging state of parties, and unpromising aspect of public affairs, to join in his administration; and those who looked only to the emolument of subordinate situations, declined connexion with a government, which no one believed could last a month. At length, and after various disappointments, the arrangements were completed; and the cabinet consisted of Mr. Pitt, first lord of the treasury and chancellor of the exchequer, lord Thurlow, lord chancellor; lord Gower, lord president of the council*; the

* Afterwards marquis of Stafford. This peer had never had the slightest intercourse whatever with Mr. Pitt, but no one of his most intimate friends took a more decided part against the India bill: and when he understood the

duke of Rutland, lord privy seal; lord Carmarthen and lord Sydney, secretaries of state; and lord Howe, first lord of the admiralty *.

difficulty there was in filling up the cabinet offices, he sent a message to Mr. Pitt, by a confidential friend, that wishing to enjoy retirement for the remainder of his life, he could not be a candidate for office; but that in the present situation of the king, and distressed state of the country, he would cheerfully take any office, in which it might be thought he could be useful. His name and experience were certainly of great service to Mr. Pitt, at the present moment. It is also due to the memory of this highly respectable nobleman, to add, that he afterwards gave up the presidentship of the council, and accepted the privy seal, an office inferior both in rank and emolument: this was done to make room for the introduction of lord Camden into the cabinet, who thought, that, having been lord chancellor, he could not with propriety accept any office but that of lord president of the council.

* The duke of Richmond, who was master general of the ordnance, was not at first a member of the cabinet, wishing to confine himself to the business of his own office; but soon afterwards, when he was one of those who advised and encouraged Mr. Pitt to persevere in his struggle against a majority of the house of commons, which he was aware was attended with considerable risque, he expressed his readiness to be in the cabinet, that he might take his share of the responsibility.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH:

1783.

Situation of the Country—Conduct of Opposition—Mr. Pitt's India Bill rejected—Parliament dissolved—Reflections.

CHAP. IV. 1783.

MR. Pitt was in the 25th year of his age, when he became first minister; and the circumstances under which he entered upon that arduous station, were peculiar and unfavorable in the extreme. His opponents were men of extensive connections, tried abilities, and long experience. Their strength in the house of commons had appeared, not only by the majorities of two to one, by which they carried the obnoxious India bill, in its different stages; but also by the majorities in the same proportion, by which they succeeded in two motions, after it was certain, that they would be dismissed from office. In resisting these powerful adversaries, he had not the assistance of a single cabinet minister in the house of commons, which was mentioned by Mr. Fox as one, among many reasons, for confidently expecting the administration to be but of short continuance: he conceived it impossible, that Mr. Pitt should alone be able to conduct the whole business of the nation, in that house, in the present state of parties.—Indeed his acceptance of office was considered as so absurd, that the motion for a new writ for Appleby, was received with loud and general laughter, by the members of opposition.

These disadvantages, sufficiently appalling in themselves, were rendered more formidable by the situation of public affairs. The regulation of the important concerns of India, a subject upon which the house of commons was pledged, in direct contradiction to Mr. Pitt's sentiments, would admit of no delay—the numerous fraudulent practices committed upon the revenue, called aloud for an immediate remedy—the public income was not nearly equal to the expence of even a moderate peace establishment—an unfunded debt of nearly thirty millions was to be provided for—some expedient for the reduction of the national debt, was essential to the maintenance of public credit—new taxes to a considerable amount, were indispensably necessary—the discontented and unquiet state of Ireland demanded attention—the claims of the American loyalists were to be inquired into and settled—a permanent arrangement was to be made for our commercial intercourse with America, in her new character of independence—and our relations with the foreign powers of Europe were, in several respects, in a delicate and critical situation. Such were the accumulated and pressing difficulties, which Mr. Pitt was fully aware he should have to encounter, when he undertook the government of the country; and we shall find, that in the course of his administration, others arose, of a nature and of a magnitude without precedent, and which no human sagacity could foresee.

THE late ministers and their friends were persuaded, that the want of support in the present house of commons, would make Mr. Pitt desirous of dissolving parliament; and therefore

they determined to persevere in the plan, which they had already begun, of throwing every possible obstacle in the way of that measure. Before a dissolution could took place, it was necessary, that the land-tax bill should pass both houses of parliament, and that a vote should pass the house of commons for making good the deficiencies of taxes of the last year, in order that the money to be raised upon the land-tax, might be carried to the sinking fund, and the treasury be enabled to pay the interest of the national debt, due on the 5th of January. On Friday, the 19th of December, the day on which Mr. Pitt's seat was declared vacant, by his acceptance of office, the land-tax bill was reported; and to prevent any unusual haste in passing it, Mr. Baker moved, that the house should adjourn to Monday the 22d, which was indeed the ordinary adjournment on a Friday. Mr. Dundas stated the near approach of the 5th of January, and urged the importance of passing the land-tax bill as speedily as possible, that the public creditors might not be disappointed of receiving their dividends; and therefore he moved, as an amendment, that the house should adjourn to to-morrow, instead of Monday, and that it should be added, "in order to give an opportunity of reading the land-tax bill a third time, if it should be then found engrossed." Mr. Fox opposed the amendment; avowedly, because the passing the land-tax bill would give facility to the dissolution of parliament, at the same time expressing his astonishment, that there could be found in the kingdom, a subject daring enough to advise his sovereign to so desperate a measure; and declaring his determination, if parliament should be dissolved, merely to suit the convenience of an ambitious young man, to make

it the business of a very serious inquiry in the next parliament. He said, that it would in some degree render gentlemen accomplices in the guilt of a dissolution without sufficient cause, if they suffered the land-tax bill to go out of their hands, before they had taken such steps as would guard against the evils, which might be expected from an abrupt dissolution. Lord North afterwards said, that "he believed there was not a man in the house, who was not sure that a dissolution was at hand." Several members spoke in favor of the amendment; but Mr. Dundas, who took the lead in Mr. Pitt's absence, did not think it expedient to divide the house, being certain that he should be left in a minority; and well knowing, that though Mr. Fox did not hesitate to delay the bill, he would not venture to prevent its passing before the 5th of January, as the non-payment of the dividends, on the regular day, would affect public credit, and inevitably cause the greatest confusion and distress in the country. The amendment, therefore, was rejected, and the house adjourned to Monday.

The dissolution of parliament, so positively expected by Mr. Fox and lord North, was a question of great importance; and Mr. Pitt weighed the arguments, on both sides, fully and dispassionately. It was certain, that in a few days there would be no impediment to a dissolution, upon the ground of the supplies; and there would then be ample time for a new parliament to meet, and pass a mutiny bill, before the 25th of March, when the old mutiny bill would expire. Upon consulting his friends, he found that many of them pressed a dissolution with the utmost earnestness, as indispensably necessary to secure his continuance in office; and the anxiety

CHAP. IV. 1783.

manifested by his adversaries to prevent it, was undoubtedly a reason for its adoption. But, on the other hand, he was convinced, that a premature and unsuccessful appeal to the people, would operate greatly and lastingly to his disadvantage. It might be true, as stated by the advocates for the measure, that in a new parliament, the number of his friends would be increased; but the real point to be considered, was, whether they would be so increased, as to render his administration strong and efficient; if not, it was better, both for himself and for the country, that a dissolution should not take place at present. Most of the great parliamentary interests were adverse to him; and his chief reliance must be upon popular and independent elections. The public opinion respecting the late ministers, had not yet been expressed, in any decided manner. The coalition had, indeed, made them unpopular; but it was doubtful, whether to such a degree, as materially to influence the elections; and Mr. Fox's India bill was not, at this moment, sufficiently understood in the country, to produce any effect of that kind. The public, however, had begun to open their eyes to the unconstitutional principle and dangerous tendency of the plan; and Mr. Pitt saw reason to believe, that the dissatisfaction and alarm, already appearing in some places, would gradually spread, and soon become general. Hoping, therefore, that hereafter there might be a more favorable opportunity for dissolving parliament, he determined, contrary to the opinion and wishes of by far the greater number of his friends, not to have recourse to that measure at present, although he was aware, that he could not long maintain his situation, without a dissolution; and that in the mean

time he should have to contend against a majority of the house of commons, headed by a powerful and irritated party.

On Monday, the land-tax bill was read a third time, and passed, after a declaration from Mr. Fox, that himself and his friends had always intended, that it should pass in time to secure the payment of the dividends on the fifth of January. This declaration was probably made for the purpose of removing a prevalent idea, that the leaders of opposition had it in contemplation to embarrass government, by putting a stop to public business of every description. The mischief, which would have arisen from not passing this bill, would have been great indeed, as on account of the deficiency in the revenue, it was found necessary to apply nearly a million*, from the credit of the land-tax, to pay the dividends.

The house then resolved itself into a committee, according to previous notice, to take into consideration the state of the nation; and Mr. Erskine concluded a long speech, with proposing an address to the king, the object of which was, to prevent a dissolution of parliament. Mr. Dundas, Mr. Bankes†, and lord Mahon, assured the committee, that they were authorized by Mr. Pitt, who was at present not a member of the house, to declare, that he had no intention to advise his majesty to dissolve parliament; upon which Mr. Fox acknowledged, that he had perfect confidence in Mr. Pitt's word; that he thought as highly of his private honor and personal character, as any of his warmest friends could do; but he

* Nine hundred and thirty-three thousand six hundred and fifty-six pounds.

† An early college friend of Mr. Pitt, with whom he continued intimate through life.

CHAP. IV. 1783. added, that the dissolution of parliament might be resolved upon, without Mr. Pitt's knowledge, by the secret advisers of the crown, and even carried into execution without his consent. In reply to Mr. Fox, Mr. Bankes farther assured the committee, that Mr. Pitt would, in that case, instantly resign: but even this assurance did not satisfy Mr. Fox. Lord North, speaking upon the same subject, said of Mr. Pitt, "on his honor and integrity, I have great reliance; I value highly the character of the right honorable gentleman; and though he is my political enemy, still I always feel myself disposed to treat him with more respect than I ever experienced from him: but highly as I value his character, I cannot trust to it upon the present occasion, because the event, to which that character is pledged, may not be within the control of the right honorable gentleman. At present there are only two cabinet ministers, (meaning Mr. Pitt and lord Gower,) and no one can tell, what may be the determination, when the cabinet is full." In consequence of these declarations, from Mr. Fox and lord North, agreeing in substance, but resting upon different grounds, Mr. Erskine persevered in his motion, and the following address to his majesty, was carried without a division:

"Most gracious sovereign,

"We, your majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the commons of Great Britain, in parliament assembled, think ourselves bound in duty humbly to represent to your majesty, that alarming reports of an intended dissolution of parliament have gone forth.

"Your majesty's faithful commons, dutifully acknowledging

the wisdom of the constitution, in trusting to the crown that just and legal prerogative, and fully confiding in your majesty's royal wisdom, and paternal care of your people, for the most beneficial exercise of it, desire, with great humility, to represent to your majesty the inconveniences and dangers, which appear to them, from a consideration of the state of the nation, likely to follow from a prorogation or dissolution of parliament, in the present arduous and critical conjuncture of affairs: The maintenance of the public credit, and the support of the revenue, demand the most immediate attention; the disorders prevailing in the government of the East Indies, at home and abroad, call aloud for instant reformation; and the state of the East India company's finances, from the pressing demands upon them, requires a no less immediate support and assistance from parliament.

"Your majesty's faithful commons are at present proceeding with the utmost diligence, upon these great objects of government, as recommended to their attention by your majesty's gracious speech from the throne; but which must necessarily be frustrated and disappointed by the delay attending a dissolution; and most especially the affairs of the East Indies, by the assembling of a new parliament, not prepared, by previous inquiry, to enter, with equal effect, upon an object involving long and intricate details, which your majesty's faithful commons have investigated for two years past, with the most laborious, earnest, and unremitting attention.

"Your majesty's faithful commons, deeply affected by these important considerations, impressed with the highest reverence and affection for your majesty's person, and anxious to preserve the lustre and safety of your government, do humbly beseech

CHAP. IV. 1783. your majesty to suffer your faithful commons to proceed on the business of the session, the furtherance of which is so essentially necessary to the prosperity of the public; and that your majesty will be graciously pleased to hearken to the advice of your faithful commons, and not to the secret advice of particular persons, who may have private interests of their own, separate from the true interests of your majesty, and your people."

This address was presented by the whole house, on the 24th; and his majesty returned the following answer:

"Gentlemen,

"It has been my constant object to employ the authority intrusted to me by the constitution, to its true and only end, the good of my people; and I am always happy in concurring with the wishes and opinions of my faithful commons.

"I agree with you in thinking, that the support of the public credit and revenue must demand your most earnest and vigilant care. The state of the East Indies is also an object of as much delicacy and importance as can exercise the wisdom and justice of parliament. I trust you will proceed with those considerations with all convenient speed, after such an adjournment as the present circumstances may seem to require; and I assure you, that I shall not interrupt your meeting by any exercise of my prerogative, either of prorogation or dissolution."

After the speaker, and the other members, had returned to the house, Mr. Fox observed, that though his majesty, in his

answer to the address, assured the house, that they should not be prevented from meeting again, by either a prorogation or dissolution, still the assurance went no farther than the meeting after the recess. " His majesty's ministers had been, it seemed, driven from their intention of dissolving parliament immediately: none of them had at present been found daring enough to advise his majesty to take so desperate a step; but how soon after the next meeting, they might venture so to do, he could not foresee. The promise, that they should meet again, was the whole extent of the royal favor; and it now stood, that their existence as a parliament depended upon this—they were to be put to death, or to be suffered to live, according as they should behave. Writs were to be moved before the recess could take place, which ought to be very short, because public business pressed; and soon after the recess, other writs must be moved, in consequence of the appointment of another administration; and of course the proceedings of the house must be again interrupted, as the present ministers could not stand long. To talk of the stability and permanency of the present administration, would be to deride and insult the house."—An observation probably intended to prevent the desertion of any of those members, who had hitherto voted with him. He added, that " he hoped, when the house met again, it would lose no time in convincing the young men, who had taken such unwarrantable measures to possess themselves of power, that the government of this country was too serious and too important a thing, to be made the plaything of children, and to be used to divert them, just as their rash and mad ambition might prompt." It was agreed.

CHAP. IV. 1783.

upon the proposal of Mr. Fox, that the house should, at its rising, adjourn to the 26th, for the purpose of moving new writs, and that on that day it should adjourn to the 12th of January, when the committee on the state of the nation was appointed to sit again: he first mentioned the 8th; but upon a remonstrance against so early a day, he consented to an adjournment of four days longer.

These points being settled, a resolution was moved by lord Beauchamp, "That the commissioners of the treasury ought not to give their consent to the acceptance of any bills drawn, or to be drawn, from India, until it shall be made to appear to this house, that sufficient means can be provided for the payment of the same, when they respectively fall due, by a regular application of the clear effects of the company, after discharging in their regular course, the customs and other sums due to the public, and the current demands upon the company; or until this house shall otherwise direct." The directors of the East India company were restrained by law from accepting bills above 300,000*l.* without the consent of the lords of the treasury; and the ground alleged for this motion, was, that bills to a much larger amount were shortly expected from India, which the company was unable to pay, and therefore that the lords of the treasury ought not, by authorizing their acceptance, to pledge the public for the payment of them. The real design of the motion, however, was, to make it necessary to pass some bill speedily for the relief, and to save the credit, of the company; the supporters of the resolution knowing perfectly well, that no measure could be carried, unless it were proposed by those who had the command of

a majority of the house of commons. In the course of the debate upon this resolution, Mr. Wilberforce, in reference to what had been previously said, observed, that it was glorious in Mr. Pitt to stand forward at a moment of public difficulty, to rescue his country and his sovereign, from the daring attempts to grasp at perpetual power, which the mad ambition of the late administration had prompted them to make. If his right honorable friend fell in such a cause, he would fall nobly; and he would receive him as the Spartan mother did her son, upon his buckler." The motion passed without a division.

The attention of the house was next called to a matter of less importance, but which appeared, to the opposition, of sufficient moment to demand their interposition. Lord Surry moved, that an address should be presented to his majesty, requesting, that he would be graciously pleased not to grant the office of chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster, for any other term than during pleasure, before the 20th day of January next. The reason assigned for this motion, was, that the grant of the chancellorship for life, would be a great impediment to an intended reform in the duchy court; but the real object was, to prevent Mr. Pitt giving this office to one of his friends for life, as lord Rockingham had given it to lord Ashburton. This motion also passed without a divison. Thus did Mr. Fox and his party, not only fix the day of meeting after the holidays, which had been uniformly left to the option of persons in office, but, in the mean time, they proposed and carried whatever motions they pleased, in violation of the established

CHAP. IV. 1784.

practice to suspend all public business, during the short necessary absence of a newly-appointed minister.

The writs were moved on the 26th, after which the house adjourned to the 12th of January.

DURING the recess, the clerkship of the pells, in the gift of the first lord of the treasury, became vacant, by the death of sir Edward Walpole. Mr. Pitt, who had only a small younger brother's fortune, and, to engage in the service of his country, had given up a lucrative and honorable profession, in which his eloquence and talents must have insured him success, could not, perhaps, have been justly censured, if he had availed himself of this opportunity to secure a permanent and adequate income; especially, as his present situation of minister was, in his own judgment, as well as in that of every other person, extremely precarious; and, in any case, its emoluments not defraying its necessary expences, it afforded no prospect of pecuniary compensation: but under existing circumstances, he disdained to convert this event to his own private advantage. He neither accepted the office himself, nor conferred it upon a relation or friend; nor did he dispose of it with a view of increasing his political influence—he gave it to colonel Barré, upon condition of his resigning a pension of 3,000*l.* a year, which was nearly equal to the value of the office; and thus a saving to that amount, was made to the public.

This act of patriotic disinterestedness excited no surprise in those who knew Mr. Pitt intimately; but upon others, conduct,

so widely different from the practice of former ministers, could not but make a strong impression. It was frequently mentioned, in both houses of parliament, with high admiration and applause; and it certainly contributed, in no small degree, to raise his character in the public estimation, at a most important moment. Lord Thurlow, in speaking upon this subject in the house of lords, "acknowledged, that he had been shabby enough to advise Mr. Pitt to take this office, as it had so fairly fallen into his hands; and he believed he should have been shabby enough to have done so himself, as other great and exalted characters had so recently set him the example; and he was so shabby as to think, that there was no occasion for him to tower above his noble predecessors in office, and to aspire to higher acts of disinterestedness and spirit. But Mr. Pitt, with notions of purity, not only very uncommon in these degenerate days, but scarcely parallelled in the purest times of Greece and Rome, had nobly preferred the public to the consideration of his own interest." I saw colonel Barré soon after this offer was made to him, and nothing could exceed the warm terms in which he spoke of it in a public view—"Sir, it is the act of a man, who feels that he stands upon a high eminence, in the eyes of that country, which he is destined to govern."

On the 12th of January, the day on which parliament met after the recess, Mr. Fox, at the unusual hour of half-past two, rose to move the order of the day, for the house to go into a committee upon the state of the nation. This he did for the purpose of getting possession of the house, and preventing

CHAP. IV. 1784.

Mr. Pitt from bringing forward any business, till his own motions should be disposed of. He was, as he must have foreseen would be the case, soon interrupted in his speech, by those members who had been re-elected, and who successively appeared to take the oaths*; and among the rest, by Mr. Pitt, who had been chosen again for Appleby.

Immediately after that ceremony was over, which occupied a considerable time, Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox rose at the same moment, and after some contest between their respective friends, the speaker decided, that Mr. Fox, who had been interrupted in his speech by the new members, had now a right to proceed, in preference to any other person. Mr. Pitt, however, having declared, that he rose for the purpose of speaking to order, was permitted to inform the house, that he had a message to deliver from his majesty. The speaker repeated, that Mr. Fox had a right to speak; and Mr. Fox said, that he should not wave that right, as Mr. Pitt might deliver the king's message after the other business, which was of great importance to the house, was concluded; and therefore he moved the order of the day.

This motion gave Mr. Pitt the liberty of speaking, and he began by noticing the art, which had been used by Mr. Fox, to gain possession of the house, and prevent his delivering a message from his majesty. He reprobated the violent and unprecedented proceedings of the gentlemen opposite to him, during his absence before the recess; and complained of the

* The usage is, for all newly-elected members, if they shall appear at the bar before four o'clock, to be called up to the table to take the oaths, whoever may happen to be speaking; but in general, public business is not begun at that hour.

attacks which had been made upon his character, when he had not the opportunity of defending himself. He assured the house, that he should shrink from no inquiry into his conduct, and that he was ready to meet any charge, which might be brought against him; but he wished the committee on the state of the nation, to be deferred a short time, for reasons which he would explain, and which he trusted would be satisfactory to the house.

It had pleased his majesty, he said, to command his services at a time, when, however unqualified for the high station of minister, he could not think himself justified in declining the offer. The circumstances of the country were peculiar and distressing. The East India bill, brought in by the right honorable gentleman—a bill so violent in its form as to give just reason for alarm to every thinking man—had been, by what powerful management it was not for him to say, hurried through the house. That bill established a species of influence unknown to the constitution of this country; and he was one of a most respectable minority, who thought, that if it passed into a law, the independence of that house, the equilibrium between the three estates of the realm, and the beautiful frame of the British government, would be at an end. The bill passed that house; and it was the idea even of those, who thought it perfectly unfit to be passed, that some bill was essentially necessary. He had pledged himself, if it were withdrawn or thrown out, to propose one less violent in its principle, and, as he thought, more adequate to its purpose. The obnoxious bill was rejected by the house of lords; and would any one object to his moving for leave to bring in

CHAP. IV. 1784. another bill? Would not all sides of the house acknowledge, that the first subject to be considered, was India? It was for that question the house had declared themselves impatient. They had thought proper to present an address to the throne, expressing their extreme anxiety to enter upon that important pursuit, which they had represented to be of so much consequence, as to make them dread any interruption whatever. Was it then possible to think of delaying this business? Was it possible to resist the introduction of a new bill, which was the only way of coming fairly to a decision upon the subject? Whatever serious inquiry into the state of the nation might be meditated afterwards, he should feel it his duty most attentively and cheerfully to join in it; but in the mean time, he begged the house to consider, that this was the first day, when the new ministers had met them in parliament.

Having been called into office by his majesty, chiefly on the ground of the India bill, it became their first duty to frame a system for the government of that part of the empire. They had not opposed the last bill by cavilling; they had not objected to it, from envy to the parents of it: they had opposed it, because they thought it a dangerous bill, and that its objects might be accomplished in a safer way. This was the point on which they were at issue. The present ministers had now to prove, that they had not lightly disturbed the government of the country; that they had not set up a captious opposition, an opposition to men merely; but that they opposed a most violent measure, and having overthrown it, they thought it incumbent upon them immediately to substitute a more moderate, a more constitutional scheme in its

place. He had condemned the last bill, because it created a new and enormous influence, by vesting in certain nominees of the minister, all the patronage of the east. If the house would agree to postpone the order of the day, and allow him, in the discharge of his duty, to move for leave to bring in a new India bill, he would state the outlines of his system as shortly and as accurately as he could. He trusted he should not be prevented, because the right honorable gentleman had forestalled the house, by rising at a time, when those persons were absent, whose duty it was to conduct official business; and he hoped, that the house in general would join him in voting against the order of the day.

After Mr. Erskine and Mr. Powys had spoken, Mr. Fox rose, and in the course of his speech, while arguing upon the necessity of taking immediate steps to prevent a dissolution of parliament, he said, for an obviouspurpose, "that parliament had never been dissolved during the business of a session, since the revolution. In the reigns of the miserable family of the Stuarts, that sort of violence was not uncommon. Charles the first had done it; Charles the second had done it; and James the second had done it; and it was, he hoped, engraven on the minds of Englishmen, that the last monarch, by whom this violence was perpetrated, was not allowed to meet another parliament: he dissolved one parliament in the middle of a session, and it put a period to his violations of the constitution, and to his reign." Lord North, general Conway, and several other members spoke; and the debate having been very personal against Mr. Pitt, he was permitted to speak a second time. He replied to a variety of accusations with which he was charged, as well with respect

CHAP. IV. 1784.

to secret influence, as the principles upon which he had come into administration. He declared, that "he went up no back-stairs; that when he was sent for by his sovereign, he necessarily went to the royal closet; that he knew of no secret influence, and that his own integrity would be his guardian against that danger; and the house might rest assured, that whenever he discovered any, he would not stay a moment longer in office. He would neither have the meanness to act under the concealed influence of others, nor the hypocrisy to pretend, when the measures of an administration, in which he had a share, were blamed, that they were measures not of his advising. If any former ministers took these charges to themselves, to them be the sting."* "Little did I think," continued Mr. Pitt, "to be ever charged in this house, with being the abettor and tool of secret influence. The novelty of the imputation only renders it the more contemptible. The integrity of my own heart, and the probity of all my public as well as my private principles, shall always be my sources of action. I will never condescend to be the instrument of any secret advisers whatever; nor, in one instance, while I have the honor to act as minister of the crown in this house, will I be responsible for measures not my own, or, at least, in which my heart and judgment do not fully concur. This is the only answer I shall ever deign to make on the subject; and I wish the house to bear it in their mind, and to judge of my future conduct by my present declaration."

However reasonable Mr. Pitt's proposal might be, to postpone all other business, till he should have delivered the message from the king, and till he should have obtained leave to bring

* Mr. Pitt alluded to lord North.

in a bill for the future government of India, Mr. Fox and his friends persisted in supporting the order of the day, and prevailed by a majority of 232 to 193.

Although this division did not take place till half-past two in the morning, the house, at that late hour, went into a committee on the state of the nation; in which Mr. Fox first moved, "That it is the opinion of this committee, that for any person or persons in his majesty's treasury, or in the exchequer, or in the bank of England; or for any person or persons whatsoever, employed in the payment of public money, to pay, or direct or cause to be paid, any sum or sums of money, for or towards the support of the services voted in this present sesssion of parliament, after the parliament shall have been prorogued or dissolved, if it should be prorogued or dissolved, before any act of parliament shall have passed, appropriating the supplies to such services, will be a high crime and misdemeanor—a daring breach of the public trust, derogatory to the fundamental privileges of parliament, and subversive of the constitution of this country."

As an explanation of this motion, which passed without a single observation from Mr. Pitt or any of his friends, it may be right to mention, that since the year 1705*, a special act had passed, at the end of every session of parliament, appropriating the supplies to the respective services, but that it had been customary to issue money for those services, upon authority of votes of the house of commons, before the passing of the appropriation act. The object of Mr. Fox in prohibiting

* The first instance upon record of an appropriation of the supplies, is at the conclusion of the statute 9 and 10 Will. 3, c. 44.

the issue of money after a dissolution, before an appropriation act had passed, was, to make a dissolution, as he thought, impossible, till the regular conclusion of the session; because, by having the command of a majority of the house of commons, he had it in his power to prevent the passing of an appropriation act till the usual time. It will afterwards appear, that no regard was paid to this resolution of the house of commons, and that parliament was actually dissolved before an appropriation act passed, Mr. Pitt taking upon himself the responsibility.

Mr. Fox moved, secondly, for an account of all sums of money issued between the 19th of December 1783, and the 12th of January 1784, for services voted in the present session, and not yet appropriated by any act of parliament. He said, that when that motion should be carried, he proposed to move, that no money should be issued for any public service, till the above "return was made, and for three days afterwards;" upon which, Mr. Brett, one of the lords of the admiralty, stated to the house, that this last resolution, if adopted, would be productive of serious inconvenience and mischief; and that it would, in fact, stop the whole machine of government. Mr. Pitt said, that he should urge no objection to either motion, because he was convinced it would be fruitless; but he thought it right to declare, that when the return should be made, the house would find, that money had been lately issued, as the exigencies of public affairs required. Mr. Fox acknowledged, that such issues, having been customary, did not subject ministers to any blame; and added, that "as he did not wish to embarrass government, and distress them where they ought not to be distressed," he would wave

the last motion, of which he had given notice, for the present; but he informed the committee, that the same motion would be brought forward in a few days, if the same occasion for it should continue to exist*. The other motion then passed without a division. After which, Mr. Fox observed, that what he had hitherto proposed, was with a view to provide against a sudden and immediate dissolution of parliament: he had one motion more to offer, calculated to prevent a dissolution at a more advanced period, which would be the only motion he should propose that night; but as some other gentlemen had motions to make, he hoped the house would not separate, when he had moved the resolution to which he alluded. He then moved, that the second reading of the mutiny bill should take place on the 23rd of February, which would, he said, allow ample time for passing the bill into a law, before the present act expired. Mr. Pitt said, that he had no objection to the motion; but the honorable gentleman seemed not aware, that his purpose might be as fully attained without the resolution, as with it, since he would, at all times, have it in his power to prevent the second reading of the bill†, till his end was answered. Mr. Fox admitted the truth of the observation, but alleged, it was necessary to have the matter formally entered upon the journals. The resolution was agreed to.

Mr. Fox having finished his motions, lord Surry, after a short speech, moved, "That it is the opinion of this committee, that in the present situation of his majesty's dominions,

* Mr. Fox did not venture to bring forward this motion again.

† Mr. Pitt meant, by Mr. Fox's having the command of a majority in the house of commons.

CHAP. IV. 1784.

it is peculiarly necessary, that there should be an administration, which has the confidence of this house, and the public." Mr. Dundas moved, as an amendment, to leave out the words " of this house, and the public," and to substitute these words, " of the crown, the parliament, and the people:" but lord Surry and Mr. Fox, whose present object was, to confine confidence in ministers to the house of commons, without any regard either to the crown, or to the house of lords, would not consent to this amendment; and the original resolution was carried, without a division. It may be remarked, that the language of this resolution was very similar to that of the house of commons, which brought king Charles to the scaffold, and overturned the constitution: their requisition to the throne at the beginning of the troubles, was, that the power should be placed in the hands of those in whom parliament, meaning the house of commons, could confide.

Lord Surry then moved, " That it is the opinion of this committee, that the late changes in his majesty's councils were immediately preceded by dangerous and universal reports, that his majesty's sacred name had been unconstitutionally abused to affect the deliberations of parliament; and that the appointments made were accompanied by circumstances new and extraordinary, and such as do not conciliate or engage the confidence of this house." In the debate which followed, Governor Johnstone, who was an independent member, unconnected with Mr. Pitt, after some severe strictures upon Mr. Fox's India bill, observed, " The confidence of this house is necessary to his majesty's ministers, yet that confidence is neither to be bestowed nor withheld from caprice or partial

affection. We have a right to expect his majesty will put his government into the hands of men of ability and integrity. If these requisites are to be found in the king's ministers, and the measures they propose are just and honorable in themselves, it is the height of faction to refuse our assent or support to such men, whatever our connexions may be with others. Respecting the present minister, who will deny his ability, after the appearance he has made in the present discussion? Much less can this come with any weight from his opponents, who are forced, in the speeches they have made in support of the measures to effect his overthrow, without trial or hearing, to acknowledge their admiration of the wonderful talents he has daily displayed. And as to his integrity and public character, is there any person who stands fairer in these respects with the community? Has malice tinged his reputation with any vice or infirmity, or any unbecoming conduct, which can shadow the lustre of the parent, whose station he has taken in this house? If then his majesty has made choice of a minister of the greatest abilities and most spotless integrity, what will the nation at large say of the conduct of this house, who will not even hear his propositions, or try him by his measures, but obstinately adhere to their determination, to force the authors of the East India bill, big with the evils I have described, into his majesty's cabinet, to mortify his private feelings, and deprive his crown of its most valuable prerogatives? It is said indeed, that this conduct is to secure our own existence; but I must, again and again, declare my opinion, that too strenuous an interference of this house to prevent its dissolution, is little short of a bill to continue the duration

CHAP. IV. 1784.

of parliament; because, if it be admitted, that the house of commons may do wrong, by assuming executive authority, or by taking privileges to themselves, inconsistent with the constitution, there is no remedy left to correct this evil, except a dissolution. History shews, that the tyranny of the many, is worse than the tyranny of the few; and if it be once established, that by repeated addresses, they can perpetuate their existence, no dissolution can take place, and consequently, both the king and the people are left remediless."

The debate was carried on for a considerable time, with great warmth; and Mr. Dundas moved, as the best means of getting rid of the question, that the chairman should leave the chair; but this motion was negatived by a majority of 196 to 142, and lord Surry's motion passed without any farther opposition.

The house was then resumed, and the three resolutions of Mr. Fox, and the two of lord Surry, were agreed to. After which, Mr. Pitt gave notice, that he should, to-morrow, move for leave to bring in his India bill; and he was at last allowed to deliver the king's message. The purport of the message was, to inform the house, as was usual upon such occasions, that on account of the river Weser being frozen up, and its navigation rendered impassable, two divisions of Hessian troops, which had been employed in America, in the service of Great Britain, had been obliged to be disembarked, and were distributed in barracks at Hilsea, Dover, and Chatham; and that his majesty had directed, that as soon as the Weser should be open, they should be again embarked, and sent to Germany. An address of thanks to his majesty, for his gracious

communication, was immediately voted, and the house adjourned at half past seven o'clock in the morning.

This was a most inauspicious beginning of Mr. Pitt's administration. On the first day he appeared in the house of commons, after his re-election, he was left in two minorities, the one of 39, and the other of 54; and five hostile motions were carried against him. The most reproachful terms, which disappointed ambition and political animosity could suggest, were applied to his principles and his conduct; and he was denied those common civilities, which had been hitherto invariably shewn to the minister of the crown. Having written to the king, at Windsor, a general account of these proceedings, he received the following answer from his majesty:—"Mr. Pitt cannot but suppose, that I received his communication of the two divisions in the long debate, which ended this morning, with much uneasiness, as it shews the house of commons much more willing to enter into any intemperate resolutions of desperate men, than I could have imagined. As to myself, I am perfectly composed, as I have the self-satisfaction of feeling, I have done my duty. Though I think Mr. Pitt's day will be fully taken up in considering with the other ministers, what measures are best to be proposed on the present crisis; yet that no delay may arise from my absence, I will dine in town, and consequently be ready to see him in the evening, if he should think that would be of utility. At all events, I am ready to take any step that may be proposed to oppose this faction, and to struggle to the last period of my life; but I can never submit to throw myself into its power. If they, in the end, succeed,

CHAP. IV. 1784.

my line is a clear one, and to which I have fortitude enough to submit."

Having found, at an interview, that firmness in his majesty, which his letter indicated*, and being himself by no means alarmed, either by the number or by the violence of his enemies, Mr. Pitt determined, with the full concurrence of his colleagues, to persevere in maintaining his station. Agreeably, therefore, to the notice he had given, he submitted to the house, on the 14th, a plan for the government and management of the affairs of the East India company; the general outlines of which were, that the political concerns of the company in India, should be placed under the control of a board of commissioners, to be nominated by the king; and that the commerce and patronage should be left in the hands of the directors†. He concluded his speech with these words: "The establishment of a moderate and effectual system of government for India, is the great and immediate object of my mind. I do not wish to gratify young ambition, by means of the situation to which I am called—I am not attached to

* In another letter to Mr. Pitt, his majesty thus expressed himself: "The opposition will certainly throw every difficulty in our way; but we must be men, and if we mean to save the country, we must cut those threads, that cannot be unravelled. Half measures are ever puerile, and often destructive." This letter was written on the 25th of January, and referred particularly to a dissolution of parliament, which his majesty then thought ought to be resorted to immediately.

† I have not thought it necessary to enter into a detail of the provisions of this bill, as it was rejected; and another upon the same principle, with some amendments, was introduced by Mr. Pitt, with better success, a few months afterwards, which will be fully explained.

its eminence—I am not governed by motives of personal interest, or of personal fame. I have introduced this plan as the deliberate conviction of my mind, made up on the fullest communication with the most intelligent men. Accept the ideas, if they are worth your notice; strengthen them with your wisdom; mature them with your experience: or, in their room, substitute a more adequate system, and I am happy. Establish a good, rational, and safe system, and dispose of me as you will. However unpleasant a majority of this house, and its insinuations against me, may be, I shall dare to meet them on this great point. I have the consciousness of a good intention; and therefore, without any serious fear of the result, as far as personally concerns myself, I conclude with moving, that leave be given to bring in a bill for the better regulation of our Indian concerns."

As soon as Mr. Dundas had seconded the motion, Mr. Fox rose and objected to the proposed bill, upon the ground of its differing in all its material provisions, from that which had lately received the approbation of the house: "Is it," said he, "less or more than the wisdom of an individual, however exalted in station—however distinguished by ability—however flattered by partizans—or however confident of his own unrivalled talents, opposed to the collective wisdom of the commons of England, in parliament assembled? I trust the propositions will be considered exclusively in that light, and the fate of them pronounced accordingly." At the conclusion of his speech, he said, "that the plan appeared to him partial, incomplete, and furnishing the company and the public with only an alleviation, instead of a remedy." Leave, however,

was given to bring in the bill; and it was agreed, that it should be read a first time on the following Friday.

Mr. Fox then observed, that though he thought the existence of the house was secured by the resolutions passed two nights before, and that it would be downright madness to dissolve parliament, yet he did not know what step the folly and frenzy of ministers might lead them to take. He wished, therefore, to learn, previously to his moving the order of the day, what assurances he could obtain, respecting the dissolution of parliament before Friday next. If there were to be no dissolution, he would wave, at that late hour, going into the committee on the state of the nation. Mr. Pitt replied, that he was at a loss, in his present state of imputed insanity, how to satisfy the honorable gentleman upon the subject of his inquiry. He could, however, assure him, that he had no intention of advising a dissolution of parliament before Friday; and that all his time, till that day, would be employed in preparing the proposed bill for the consideration of the house. Mr. Fox was satisfied with this assurance; and the house, at two o'clock, adjourned to Friday.

The business of that day was begun by Mr. Duncombe's presenting a petition from the county of York*, for a more equal representation of the people in parliament. Lord North, Mr. Powys, and Mr. Burke, declared their disapprobation of the object of the petition; but, on the other hand, Mr. Pitt said, that soon after his introduction into the house of commons, he had professed himself a friend to parliamentary reform, and that he still continued so. If, indeed, any thing had been

* Mr. Duncombe was member for Yorkshire.

wanting to confirm him in his decided adherence to that opinion, it was the conduct, of which he had been a witness, for some weeks past, in that house; a conduct, which, he was convinced, he never should have seen, had the reform, which the people so much wished for, been obtained. He would not, however, be understood to be an advocate for every species of reform, which might appear necessary to other men; but a temperate and moderate reform, temperately and moderately pursued, he would, at all times, and in all situations, be ready to promote.

After leave was given to bring up the petition, Mr. Duncombe moved, that it should lie upon the table, and Mr. Pitt seconded the motion; upon which lord Surry observed, that the freeholders of the county of York expected, that the right honorable gentleman would have done something more than barely to second a motion, that the petition should lie on the table; they fondly entertained a hope, that he would have taken an active part in the business, and have supported the reform with all his power. They reposed the greatest confidence in his abilities, which were certainly of the first rate; and as they had formed an opinion, that he would not consent to make part of a cabinet, in which there was a man who was hostile to a parliamentary reform, so they presumed that success would attend their application, because they expected it would be supported by all the weight of government. This he had been commissioned, by a most respectable body of freeholders of the county of York, to communicate to the right honorable gentleman; and he had taken that opportunity to convey to him, in the most public manner, their wishes,

CHAP. IV. 1784.

their hopes, and their expectations. He himself was a friend to the reform. He had seen the fatal consequences of secret influence, which would not have dared to shew itself, had the house of commons been constituted in such a manner as to be in reality the representative of the nation. He allowed, that Mr. Pitt's abilities entitled him to fill any of the great offices of state, and he should have been happy, if he had obtained his present situation by constitutional means; but he lamented, that a person of such eminent qualifications should have become the instrument of secret influence, and joined with those who were the worst foes of the constitution.

Mr. Pitt replied, that he was surprised to hear the noble lord censure him for not doing something more than barely second a motion, that the petition should lie upon the table. He might have expected a censure indeed, if he had gone any farther, as he might have afforded the gentlemen on the other side of the house, an opportunity to cry out, that he had presumed, with defiled hands, to pollute the fair petition of the people; that he, the creature of secret influence, should dare to interfere, when there was question of a measure, which was to root influence out of that house. He might have thought, therefore, that considering the light in which he appeared to the noble lord, his conduct in barely seconding the motion, would have met with approbation, instead of censure. He should have been ready to return the noble lord his thanks for the flattering opinion he entertained of his abilities, if, by other parts of his speech, he had not been convinced, that this good opinion of his abilities was overbalanced by a bad opinion of his political conduct. He was, however, thankful to the very

respectable body of freeholders of the very respectable county of York, for the favorable sentiments they entertained of him; but he was at a loss to conceive, where they had learnt, that he would never make part of a cabinet, any one member of which should be hostile to parliamentary reform. Perhaps it would be utterly impossible ever to form such a cabinet. The proposition was a point, on which there were so many different opinions, that he believed if the country was to remain without a cabinet, until one could be formed, which should be unanimous on the subject, England would never see an administration. To him, on the other hand, it appeared not a little singular, that the noble lord and his friends, who were such determined enemies to influence, should expect that a measure relating simply to the commons, such as a reform in the representation of the people, should in any degree originate in the cabinet, or come forward under their influence and protection. All that he would add was, that individually he would exert the utmost of his ability to support the measure of a reform in parliament, whenever that question should be brought before the house.

Mr. Fox agreed with Mr. Pitt, that it was scarcely possible to find a proper number of persons to form a cabinet, who should concur in the expediency, policy, or necessity of a parliamentary reform. The petition was ordered to lie on the table.

This conversation was evidently begun, with a view of bringing discredit upon Mr. Pitt, for the supposed want of activity and zeal in the cause of parliamentary reform; but the readiness and dexterity, with which he replied to lord

CHAP. IV. 1784. Surry's insinuations, and the open and decided manner in which he asserted and maintained his former opinion, completely defeated his lordship's object. Lord Surry seems not to have been aware, that if any blame could have been imputed to Mr. Pitt, for sitting in cabinet with enemies to parliamentary reform, the same belonged to Mr. Fox; and to a consciousness of this, we are to describe what Mr. Fox said of a cabinet, consisting exclusively of the friends of parliamentary reform.

Mr. Pitt then presented his India bill, which was read the first time, and ordered to be printed. He moved, that it should be read the second time on Wednesday next, and expressed a hope, that no one would object to so early a day, as it was universally admitted, that some bill was necessary for the government of India. Mr. Fox, however, suggested, that it would be proper to allow more time for the consideration of the measure; and therefore, he proposed Friday, instead of Wednesday, to which Mr. Pitt consented.

This point being settled, Mr. Fox moved the order of the day, for going into a committee on the state of the nation. Lord Surry immediately asked Mr. Pitt, if he would give the house the satisfaction of knowing, whether a dissolution would take place, before the India bill should be disposed of. Upon which Mr. Fox observed, that "let Mr. Pitt give what answer he pleased, or no answer at all, it would not satisfy him, so as to prevent him from going into a committee." Mr. Pitt having therefore declined giving any answer to lord Surry's question, the house resolved itself into a committee. Lord Charles Spencer immediately moved the following resolution, which he

represented as a natural consequence of those to which the house had already agreed, as the most moderate which could be proposed under present circumstances, and as likely to produce a settled and efficient administration, " That it having been declared to be the opinion of this house, that, in the present situation of his majesty's dominions, it is peculiarly necessary, that there should be an administration that has the confidence of this house and of the public; and that the appointment of his majesty's present ministers was accompanied by circumstances new and extraordinary, and such as do not conciliate or engage the confidence of this house; the continuance of the present ministers, in trusts of the highest importance and responsibility, is contrary to constitutional principles, and injurious to the interests of his majesty and his people." Mr. Powys opposed this motion, as premature, unjust, unprecedented, and unwarrantable. He spoke in very high terms, both of Mr. Pitt and of Mr. Fox; declaring, however, his disapprobation of the manner in which the one had come into office; and blaming the other for his coalition with lord North. He thought Mr. Fox's ambition laudable and honorable; but he believed him regardless of the means by which he gratified it. He said, that he had long wished the two right honorable gentleman could have acted together; but he acknowledged, that he saw in lord North a great obstacle to such a junction.

This was the first occasion upon which any desire of an union between Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox, was expressed in the house of commons, and it was now mentioned in a very cursory way, and without any expectation of its taking place. Mr. Fox, in

CHAP. IV. 1784.

noticing that part of Mr. Powys's speech, said, that he neither courted nor avoided union with any party; and that he had no objection to connect himself with persons of any description, with whom he could form a permanent junction, on sound and general principles. He defended his coalition with lord North, although he had formerly differed from him on various subjects; but these grounds of difference were now at an end. He accused the ministers of having formed a conspiracy against the constitution, and of having got into office by an act of treachery: but he afterwards added, "I venerate the character of the young man who holds the reigns of government at present; I admire his virtues, and respect his ability."

As this was a very important motion, being intended to compel ministers to resign, and was frequently referred to in subsequent debates, I shall transcribe, from the parliamentary register, Mr. Dundas's speech, which is short, and places the question in its true light. In replying to Mr. Fox, he said,

"Sir,—After the testimony of so many honorable and independent gentlemen, who have with one voice acknowledged, that the resolution before you, is, in the present case, absolutely unwarrantable, I rise with peculiar satisfaction, and cannot but augur well of the event of this night's debate.—Sir, I rejoice to see the moderation and temper which has shewn itself on this occasion; I rejoice that we meet the question fairly; and that it is not brought forward as that was, upon which this resolution is founded, and of which it is said to be nothing more than a corollary. The former question, important as it was, not only to the interests, but to the personal honor of his

majesty's present ministers, was brought before us suddenly and unexpectedly, at five o'clock in the morning, when every man's faculties for speaking, for hearing, and for judging properly, were exhausted by a previous debate of more than twelve hours; and when a very considerable portion of the house had departed, under the firm and very natural persuasion, that no more questions of consequence were likely to be introduced. The present question, as it is brought forward at a better hour, and with a better temper, so will it be decided upon, I trust, with a better and clearer judgment; and I assure you, sir, I shall attempt so far to follow the example of those before me, and of the right honorable gentleman himself, (Mr. Fox,) as to suffer nothing personal, nothing indecent, nothing heated, nothing unbecoming the critical and awful hour, in which I speak, to escape out of my lips.

" Sir, the first thing I have to observe, is clearly and distinctly this; that allowing, for argument's sake, actual credit for every report without doors, and every insinuation that has been made here, the present resolution is, nevertheless, utterly without foundation. What, sir, is the utmost that reports have ever said? That my lord Temple has indiscreetly, wantonly, and, if you will, unconstitutionally, reported his majesty's private opinion on the subject of the India bill; and that, in the house of lords, that bill has been by these means thrown out. But, sir, is my lord Temple a minister? Your resolution says, his majesty's present ministers. Lords of the bedchamber are no ministers; who, therefore, are those men, that your resolution means to slander? I call on the noble lord to

CHAP. IV. 1784. amend his motion, and to name in it every minister of his majesty, on whose character he means that this stigma should alight. Sir, I defy any man even to insinuate, that any one of his majesty's cabinet has ever had the least share of that secret influence, upon which this motion is founded, and for which it is to turn them out of office.—Sir, they are not even accused; they have a right to be accused, and they will deny every part of the imputation. The throwing out of the India bill, was a matter previous to their appointment; a matter in which they had no concern, and for which they can share no blame, even if I allow, for argument's sake, that blame is due any where.

"His majesty's present ministers have, I assert, been constitutionally chosen by him, who has the sole right to choose them; and by this resolution, they are, by this house, instantly turned out. Sir, is it therefore for their incapacity and insufficiency, that you overthrow them? (Hear! hear!) Then, sir, I insist that their incapacity and insufficiency shall be named in the motion, as the ground upon which you at once deny them your confidence. Let this house judge, and know, upon what ground they give their vote. Let me tell you, sir, our constituents will ask to know—the people of England must and will know—why ministers, named by his majesty, are instantly turned out by the house of commons; turned out, I say, before they are tried, and condemned before they are accused.

"Sir, if this resolution means any thing, it is in the nature and spirit of an address, requesting the king to appoint a new set of ministers. I am forced, therefore, to view it in this

light, since it is, in effect, pointed at his majesty, and must probably be followed up by an address, in the same tenor and to the same purport.

"I beg, therefore, the house will go with me in considering, how the royal mind must feel, and what sort of language his majesty must hold to himself, upon such an address:—'You send me back the ministers I have just chosen; have I not, then, the right to choose my ministers? Certainly yes, you say.—But what crimes have they committed? What is it they have so soon perpetrated? Certainly not one act of their administration is yet passed. Are they, therefore, without the confidence of the house of commons? Are they men so unpopular, so incapable, so insufficient, that you will not bear with them, even for a moment? Is the minister, who devotes himself to the house of commons particularly, so unpopular and so incapable? I had chosen him; I had singled him out as a man, of talents the most astonishing, of integrity the most incorrupt, of a reputation the most extraordinary.—I had fondly imagined him the favorite of the house of commons; I had been taught to fancy, that in celebrating his name, all my people joined in one anthem of praise. Is it for this, therefore, that the house of commons thus instantly condemn him? Is it on account of his fair fame and unexampled reputation, that I am desired to withdraw my public confidence from such a person as this? It follows, no doubt, therefore, that you wish me to substitute characters as opposite as possible to this. You wish me then to name some man or men, in whom I can place no confidence; some man or men, whom my people execrate, and in whom I myself, in perfect

CHAP. IV. 1784.

union with my people, cannot confide. If such men are to be my only choice, if unpopularity, hatred, and distrust, are to be the qualifications and the great characteristics that form a minister in these days, it would be matter of the sincerest joy to me, if the house of commons would permit me to wave my choice. Let the house of commons name their minister; let them search out persons suited to their purposes, only let me not be forced to play the farce of naming to them, men whom they have singled out, whom my conscience condemns on public grounds, and whom my people tell me, they do not approve.'

" Such would be the natural answer of a king, allowing him to be a man of feeling, and a man of honor, like ourselves, on such an unheard-of address as this; just this must necessarily be his private sentiments and soliloquy on the occasion. Therefore, I would beseech the house at once, to name the men in whom alone they are determined to confide. Already we know their names. Let us bring in a bill, naming the right honorable gentleman, and the noble lord, exclusive ministers of this country, for a term of years; for that is precisely the spirit and meaning, that, sir, is the plain English of this resolution; except indeed that by the present motion, the house of lords is exempted from any share in the nomination; whereas, if it was a bill, it would not be the house of commons alone that would name the ministers of this country.

" Sir, we have been told by the right honorable gentleman, that this is a great constitutional question, and not a question who shall be minister.—I meet the house on that ground; and I beg leave to request no more favor than this, viz. that every

man, who thinks with the right honorable gentleman, that this is not a question, who shall be minister, will vote with him, and I am content that all the rest should vote with me. Nay, sir, if there is any man in this house, who in his conscience does not think, that this resolution serves to name the right honorable gentleman, and his colleagues, the ministers, and the only ministers of this country, I am content that all such persons, to a man, should vote against me. I feel on this ground very sure of finding myself to night, in a most respectable majority indeed. Sir, I have no personal objections or dislike to the noble lord, or the right honorable gentleman; it is upon clear constitutional grounds that I resist this vote; and I call upon the independent part of the house, to stand forth and maintain the character, the moderation, for thus I will venture to say, they will most effectually maintain the true consequence, of this British house of commons. Let the house look well to its conduct this night; for this night it is about to decide, what is the constitution of this country. The assumption of power and privileges, which did not belong to it, has once proved the overthrow of this constitution; we are verging towards the same precipice again; we are claiming to ourselves the right of appointing ministers; we are disclaiming the nomination of his majesty, without cause and without trial."

Several members spoke after Mr. Dundas; and, at last, Mr. Pitt rose to declare, that he could not suffer the debate to close, without saying a few words; but, as he saw the impatience of the house to separate, an impatience which he could

CHAP. IV. 1784.

not wonder at, when he considered the very late hour of the night, he promised that he would detain them only for a few moments. Whatever might be the fate of the motion, he could not but feel the utmost comfort and satisfaction, at the full, fair, and impartial discussion the question had undergone, and more particularly in having been witness to a debate, in which, although, from the personal nature of it, he was debarred from taking any part himself, so many worthy and truly respectable gentlemen had risen to defend his character, and rescue it from the odium, with which the violence of faction, and the malice of party attempted to load it. In the course of the day a great variety of topics had been handled, in a way which did honor to the ability of those who had spoken, and proved incontestably, that the art and ingenuity of that set of men, whose chief aim it had been to mislead and confound, had not been successful to the degree which they might possibly have hoped; but that there were others, and those of acknowledged estimation and importance in the country, who were not more accurate in their judgments, than zealous in their determination to tear the mask from the face of faction, and shew it in its native colors. This necessarily afforded him all the gratification which his most sanguine hopes could have aspired to. He desired to throw himself upon the candor, the justice, and the honor of the house; observing, that if the present motion should pass before the merits of his India bill should be discussed, he should be condemned unheard, unknown, untried, unconvicted.

As soon as Mr. Pitt sat down, the house divided, and the resolution was carried by a majority of 21, the numbers being

205, and 184. After the resolution was reported to the house, and agreed to, an adjournment took place to the Tuesday following, when the committee on the state of the nation was to sit again.

Upon the meeting of the house on that day, Mr. Rolle, who had given notice of a motion for certain papers, said, he should not then make his motion, and assigned, as one of his reasons, "a rumor that a negotiation was on foot, for effecting an union between the two political parties, at present opposed to each other." Mr. Fox rose immediately, and declared, that there was no ground, as far as he knew, for such rumor; and that it was very indecent to postpone a motion, on a pretence of that kind. He then proceeded to express his astonishment, that ministers should continue in office, after a resolution had passed the house of commons, declaring, that they did not possess the confidence of that house. He wished, however, to give his majesty's ministers time to reflect, and coolly to consider the situation in which they stood; and therefore he proposed, that the committee on the state of the nation should be postponed to the following Monday, by which day he hoped ministers would be able to give such advice to his majesty, as the situation of affairs demanded: if not, it would be necessary for the house to take some step, which should render it absolutely impossible for them to continue in their offices. He concluded with these words, "As to the idea of an union with those he was now opposing, all he would say, was, that he was not an enemy to any individual; but gentlemen should consider how far it was practicable to effect it, consistently with principles that appeared almost irreconcileable."

After several members had expressed an earnest wish for a junction between Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox, Mr. Pitt said, "he wished the sitting of the committee to be deferred for some time, though he entertained no desire to get rid of it entirely: he was by no means averse to the union, so strongly and so properly recommended, by respectable and independent country gentlemen; but on the other hand, he agreed perfectly with the right honorable gentleman, that an union not founded on principle, and which would produce disunion, where it would be more dangerous than in that house, would be a fallacious union, and such as no lover of his country could ever wish to see. The right honorable gentleman had asserted, that he (Mr. Pitt,) in common with his majesty's other ministers, held his place in defiance of the opinion of that house: in answer to that charge he would say, that nothing but a sense of his duty to the public, could keep him in office; and when in a committee on the state of the nation, that business should come to be agitated, he would state the motives upon which he acted, and which, he trusted, would be found just and reasonable by the committee; for the present, he would only add, that he thought he could not at this moment go out of office with so much honor as had attended his coming into it." It was agreed, that the committee on the state of the nation, should be deferred to the following Monday.—From Mr. Fox's speeches this day, it was evident that he was disconcerted, because Mr. Pitt had not resigned in consequence of the resolution moved by lord Charles Spencer. But though Mr. Fox considered the majority upon that occasion, as sufficient to produce the effect he wished, yet he could

not conceal from himself, that it was much less than upon either of the divisions four nights before; and as lord Charles Spencer's motion was more immediately directed against Mr. Pitt, Mr. Fox might doubt how far he should be supported in any personal question of a still stronger nature. It was, probably, on that ground, he thought it better not to hazard any other motion in the committee on the state of the nation, till the fate of Mr. Pitt's India bill should be decided. He might, not without reason, expect, that the division upon that question would be greatly in his favor, as his own India bill, the principle of which was irreconcileable with that of Mr. Pitt, had been carried with very little opposition, in point of numbers. He had been studious to represent his India bill as the bill of the house of commons; because, by passing it with so great majorities, they had, as it were, adopted it for their own; and we have seen, that when Mr. Pitt first explained the substance of his bill, Mr. Fox argued, that the house was bound, in consistency, to reject the plan, as being essentially different from that, to which they had recently given their full and unequivocal sanction; and he might hope, that if Mr. Pitt failed in a measure, which was the avowed cause of his coming into office, and to which he had confidently appealed as the test by which he wished to be tried, he would instantly resign.

On the Friday, Mr. Pitt, according to previous notice, moved, that his India bill be read a second time, and committed. Mr. Fox opposed the commitment of the bill, in a long speech, in which he frequently referred to his own bill, and compared it with that then before the house. Mr. Pitt replied to the arguments and objections of Mr. Fox, and of other members;

and, at the end of the debate, the commitment of the bill was negatived by a majority of eight, the numbers being 222 and 214. The bill was afterwards rejected without a division.

An uninteresting conversation followed, relative to the borough of Harwich; after which Mr. Fox moved for "leave to bring in a bill for the better regulation and government of our affairs in the East Indies;" and, at the same time, he informed the house, that the principles of his new bill would be the same as of that which had been rejected by the house of lords. Leave being given, Mr. Fox, suspecting that Mr. Pitt, on account of the failure of his India bill, might be induced to have recourse to a dissolution of parliament, asked him, whether the house would be permitted to proceed with the bill, which he (Mr. Fox) meant to introduce; or whether it was the intention of ministers to dissolve parliament. He said, that as his majesty's answer to the address of the house, before the recess, certainly contained an equivocal meaning, and admitted of various interpretations, he thought it incumbent on Mr. Pitt to rise and declare explicitly, what was the true sense of that answer, and what was the construction which he, as the framer, put upon it. Mr. Pitt, however, did not rise; and, after some time, sir Grey Cooper observed, that though Mr. Pitt's silence might be interpreted into an intention to dissolve parliament, yet he could not believe, that any set of men would take so violent a step, under present circumstances. He proceeded to state two great obstacles to a dissolution; the expiration of the mutiny bill, and the want of appropriation of the supplies which had been granted to his majesty. He thought, however, that if Mr. Pitt persisted in his silence, the house should come

to some resolution on the subject. Upon sir Grey Cooper's sitting down, the house called loudly upon Mr. Pitt to rise; but when they found that their endeavors were ineffectual, they called as loudly upon sir Grey Cooper, to move a resolution. In the midst of this clamor, Mr. Fox rose again, and spoke with great warmth. He urged many objections to a dissolution, and said, that he "could not speak of the sulky silence of the right honorable gentleman, in any other terms than those of indignation." He called upon him to explain his intention, so as to supersede the necessity of the house adopting a measure to prevent a dissolution. Mr. Dempster followed Mr. Fox, and stated additional objections to a dissolution, arising from the season of the year, which would make the new elections extremely inconvenient, if not absolutely impossible, in some parts of the kingdom. Upon Mr. Dempster's sitting down, the house called again vehemently upon Mr. Pitt to rise. He did not, however, yield to the clamors of his opponents, but persevered in sitting still. General Conway then rose, and very warmly upbraided Mr. Pitt for his silence: he called upon him "to explain his conduct for his own honor: he called upon him to clear himself from the imputation which lay against him. The present ministry, originating in darkness and secrecy, maintained themselves by artifice and reserve. All their conduct was dark and intricate. They existed by corruption; and they were now to dissolve parliament, after sending their agents about the country to bribe the electors." Upon hearing these words, Mr. Pitt rose, and interrupted general Conway, by calling him to order: he desired him to specify the instances, where the agents of ministers had gone

CHAP. IV. 1784.

about the country bribing voters; it was an assertion, which, he was confident, the right honorable general could not bring to proof, and which, as he could not prove it, he ought not to have made. He said, that no arguments however artful, no strong words thrown out with a view to put him off his guard, nor any expressions of any kind, which the honorable general could use, should draw him aside from that fixed purpose, which, upon mature deliberation, he had been convinced it was his duty to adhere to. Individual members had no right to call upon him for replies to questions, involving in them great and important considerations; and it was not incumbent upon him to answer interrogatories put to him, in the harsh language which had been used. He noticed general Conway's assertion, that it was for his honor, he should satisfy the house: he begged to tell the honorable general, that he was himself the best judge of his own honor, and that he stood in need of no adviser how to act, where his honor was concerned. After dwelling upon that point, he again complained of general Conway's intemperate and unparliamentary language, which he was determined not to imitate, concluding with the words, which Scipio applied to Fabius, "si nullâ aliâ re, modestiâ certe et temperando linguæ, adolescens senem vicero*." General Conway, Mr. Sheridan, lord North, lord Surry, Mr. Eden, Mr. Fox, and other members, successively called upon Mr. Pitt to acquaint the house, whether he intended to advise the dissolution of parliament; and several of them threatened, if he refused, to make a motion, to compel him to answer. These demands, and these threats, had no effect whatever upon

* Liv. lib. 28, sect. 44.

Mr. Pitt: he persisted in his silence. At length, Mr. Fox perceiving, that neither he, nor his friends, could prevail upon Mr. Pitt to give them any information upon the subject of a dissolution, and probably not knowing what resolution to move in so peculiar a case, rose for the fourth time, and after repeating his astonishment at Mr. Pitt's silence, which he called an insult to the house, proposed an adjournment to the next day, although it was Saturday, when he hoped members would attend, that "proper measures might be taken to vindicate the honor, and assert the privileges, of the house." The house immediately adjourned, it being then two o'clock.

The following day, the house, at the usual hour of meeting, was uncommonly full, under a general expectation that parliament would be dissolved; members being anxious to learn, whether that event was likely to take place immediately. As soon as Mr. Pitt entered the house, Mr. Powys rose under such emotion, that he shed tears; and after some introductory observations upon what had passed the preceding evening, and a declaration, that his conduct would be regulated by what he conceived would be for the advantage of the country, he said, that before he should proceed, he wished to put a question to the right honorable chancellor of the exchequer, by the answer to which, he should be determined, whether or not he should make the motion, which he had in contemplation. If the right honorable member should not give any answer at all, he would not construe his silence into disrespect; but he should construe it to mean, that he did not think proper to give an answer to it, lest he should engage too far in a business of a very delicate nature: however, in the present

alarming situation of affairs, he thought it his duty to put his question, and to call for an answer to it. The question, therefore, to which he wished to have an answer, was, "whether that house might expect to be in existence, and to meet again on Monday next?" He did not, as the right honorable member might see, call for an answer that might proclaim to the public the secrets of the crown, which, as a minister, the right honorable gentleman was bound not to reveal: he wished simply to know from him, whether, on Monday next, the house might expect to meet again, in order to proceed to business. Mr. Pitt remaining silent for some time, Mr. Powys rose again, and said, that he called upon the right honorable gentleman, as minister of the crown, to give him an answer. Mr. Pitt then said, that he had laid down to himself a rule, from which he thought it his duty not to depart, which was, not to pledge himself to the house, that in any possible situation of affairs, he would not advise his majesty to dissolve parliament; however, as the honorable gentleman had brought the matter to a very narrow point, in asking, whether the house might expect to meet on Monday next, he would so far gratify the honorable gentleman, as to tell him, that he had no intention, by any advice he should give, to prevent the meeting of the house on that day. Mr. Powys expressed himself satisfied with this answer, and the house adjourned to Monday.

As the rejection of Mr. Pitt's India bill led his adversaries to expect, that a dissolution of parliament would immediately take place, so it suggested to him the propriety of again considering the expediency of resorting to that measure; and in the mean while he was, as we have seen, reluctant to

answer questions upon that subject. His decision, after mature deliberation, was the same as before, and upon the same ground. He still feared, that he should not gain sufficient strength, in a new parliament, to give stability to his administration; and therefore he chose to submit for some time longer, to all the inconveniences and difficulties of struggling against a majority of the house of commons; and to encounter all the violence with which he was threatened, rather than risque a dissolution under present circumstances; or desert a post, which duty to his sovereign, and regard to the constitution, called upon him to maintain. He had, indeed, the satisfaction of perceiving, that the favorable disposition of the public towards himself, was gradually increasing, and that his opponents were growing every day more unpopular. The corporation, and also the merchants and traders, of the city of London, had presented addresses to the king, in which they strongly expressed their approbation of the conduct of the house of lords in rejecting Mr. Fox's India bill, thanked his majesty for dismissing his late ministers, and declared their resolution to support the legal exercise of the royal prerogative; and there was reason to think, that this example of the metropolis would be immediately followed by other parts of the kingdom. Persuaded, that the cause in which he was engaged, just and constitutional as he believed it to be, must ultimately triumph, he trusted, that, by continuing to act upon the same principles, and with the same firmness, and by giving his adversaries an opportunity of lowering themselves by their indiscretion and violence still more in the opinion of the people, he should, in a few weeks, be able to dissolve

parliament with a fair prospect of success. It will hereafter appear, that upon this occasion he gave a remarkable proof of that penetration and judgment, for which he was so highly distinguished. It was certain that a dissolution would now, and indeed at any moment since he came into office, have been productive of some advantage to him; but he had the wisdom and the courage to forego that benefit, unpleasant as the forbearance was, in many respects, and to wait, till the measure could be adopted in a manner fully to answer his purpose.

The members of opposition, however, still supposing that Mr. Pitt had a dissolution of parliament in contemplation, endeavored to prevent it, by putting an interpretation upon the king's answer to the address of the house of commons before the Christmas recess, which implied his majesty's promise not to dissolve parliament, till an India bill should be passed, and some provision made for the maintenance of public credit. When the house met on the 26th, Mr. Eden, after a short introductory speech, moved, "That it appears to this house, that his majesty's most gracious answer of the 24th of December last, contains assurances, upon which this house cannot but most firmly rely, that his majesty will not, by the prorogation or dissolution of parliament, interrupt this house in their consideration of proper measures for regulating the affairs of the East India company, and for supporting the public credit and revenues of this country; objects, which, in the opinion of his majesty, of this house, and of the public, cannot but be thought to demand the most immediate and unremitting attention of parliament."—As soon as Mr. Marsham had seconded

the motion, Mr. Pitt rose, and said, that he took the earliest opportunity of speaking upon a motion, which every gentleman must be aware, concerned him personally. As the construction of his majesty's answer was now brought forward in the shape of a question, and thus rendered the subject of free parliamentary discussion, he was certainly bound to meet that question, and enter upon its merits fairly and unreservedly. His mind, he was ready to confess, was relieved from those difficulties, which he had before felt, and which had determined him to resist every attempt of members to extort from him, as minister, a verbal declaration relative to the intention of government with respect to a dissolution of parliament. That sort of embarrassment being wholly removed, by the matter no longer depending on the interrogatories of private individuals, but coming forward in the shape of a regular motion (and he begged leave to observe, that the question had never before been put to him by the house,) he would state his opinion explicitly upon the subject. That his majesty, by his answer, gave the house to understand, and in a manner bound himself, that he would not interrupt their meeting again after the Christmas recess, was undoubtedly true; but he saw not, how the royal word could be considered as pledged any farther. The present motion declared it to be the construction put upon his majesty's answer by that house, that his majesty had promised not to interrupt their deliberations, by an exercise of his royal prerogative of prorogation or dissolution, while the affairs of the East India company, and the support of public credit, continued the subjects of their consideration. To such an indefinite promise, he could not subscribe; and therefore,

to a motion, affixing such an unlimited construction upon the king's answer, he must refuse his assent; and that for the strongest reason, which could possibly be adduced, namely, because he knew, that when he advised his majesty to use the words in which the answer was framed, he never had such a general unqualified sense of them in his contemplation; nor would the words themselves fairly admit of that meaning. He appealed also to the recollection of the house, whether the sense, for which he was then contending, was not the one in which the answer had been formerly understood by gentlemen on the opposite side, and upon which they had repeatedly argued and acted. He said, that though he never would advise the king to pledge himself indefinitely, to abstain from exercising his undoubted prerogative of dissolving parliament; yet he had no hesitation to declare, in his ministerial capacity, that at the present moment, there was no intention to stop the proceedings of that house, either by prorogation or dissolution.

Mr. Fox expressed himself perfectly satisfied with this declaration, as far as a dissolution of parliament was concerned; but he inveighed against Mr. Pitt with great warmth, and at considerable length, for continuing in his situation as minister, "in positive and direct contempt of a solemn resolution of this house;" and he added, that "such an insult to the honor, the sense, and the judgment of parliament, must not be overlooked." He said, that Mr. Pitt's "conduct plainly shewed, that he considered himself superior to the house:" he accused him "of stealing into office by private intrigue and secret influence:" he called him "the unconstitutional minister of the crown, against the voice of parliament, and the spirit of

the constitution;" and he intimated, in plain terms, that if Mr. Pitt "persevered thus to mock and insult the dignity and honor of parliament," he, and his friends with whom he acted, would feel it necessary to adopt strong and violent measures, however sorry they might be to recur to means, which might tend to dissolve those bonds of union and harmony between the legislative and executive powers, so necessary for carrying into effect the various operations of policy and government. At the same time he said, that being reluctant to proceed to disagreeable extremities, he would not, on that night, or perhaps for some time, move any resolution upon the subject. He noticed the wish, which had been expressed in a former debate, for an union of parties, as the only means of establishing a permanent administration; but he maintained, that the honor of the house of commons required the resignation of the present ministers, which he must, therefore, insist upon as a necessary preliminary, before any negotiation for that purpose could take place.

In answer to these invectives and threats, Mr. Pitt said, that he had not in his former speech mentioned the subject so much dwelt upon by the right honorable gentleman, because he did not perceive, that any thing in the present motion had the smallest reference to it. He had waited with the expectation, that the house would go into the committee on the state of the nation, and that some motion would then be brought forward, which would afford him a more proper opportunity of explaining the reasons, which had induced him to continue in office, after the late resolutions of the house. He had never shewn any backwardness to account for his con-

CHAP. IV. 1784.

duct; and called upon, as he had been, he would now deliver his sentiments freely, which was at all times the right of every man, and would doubtless not be denied to him. He came into office to fulfil the duty he owed to his majesty, whose confidence he had not forfeited by any attempt to introduce a new power, unknown to the constitution; and he considered himself much aggrieved in being subjected to the censure of that house, without any charge being proved against him—in being condemned, unconvicted, and untried. But to suppose that he set himself up as superior to the house of commons, was, he imagined, an opinion which no man could seriously entertain; for which indeed there was no foundation, except that he thought differently from a majority of the house; and if that was a crime, it was one, of which the honorable gentleman himself had been frequently guilty. Much less would it be thought, that he held the resolutions of that house in contempt, or regarded them with any degree of indifference. On the contrary, he had the profoundest respect for the house, and the utmost reverence for its resolutions. That he stood in a situation perfectly new, he was ready to admit; but that he stood in that situation in contempt of that house, or as holding himself superior to its authority, he must beg leave to deny. New and extraordinary circumstances might justify new and extraordinary conduct. For any minister, who had been pronounced unworthy of the approbation of that house, to remain in office, was, he confessed, far from common; but he hoped he should not give offence, when he asserted, that a minister might nevertheless act constitutionally by remaining in office, after such disapprobation had been expressed. He

intreated pardon for what he was going to say; but he conceived, that, according to the constitution, the appointment or removal of ministers rested not with the house of commons; and therefore, there was nothing illegal in a minister's remaining in office, after that house had declared against him: at the same time he acknowledged, that such a step, without the strongest possible reasons, would be rash, imprudent, and unwarrantable. He had not continued in his situation from motives of ambition, from love of office, or from any reluctance to part with its emoluments; but, because his immediate resignation, after the resolution of last Friday se'nnight, must have been followed by the restoration of the late ministers, who had, by their unconstitutional conduct, forfeited the confidence of their sovereign and of the people; this change, therefore, would have been dangerous to the best interests of the public—the only consideration, which could have kept him in office, after he had lost the confidence of that house. To remain a minister under such circumstances, was no pleasure to him; but, on the other hand, pain and mortification. He urged, however, the gradual diminution of the majority, as a proof that the cause of his antagonists was declining; and assured the house, that by continuing in office, he conscientiously believed himself to be performing an important duty to his king and country, in which he was determined to persevere, and not to resign for the purpose of entering into a negotiation for an union of parties. If gentlemen really wished to form a stable and extended administration, upon fair and liberal principles, let them lay aside the trifles of etiquette and ceremony, and discarding all personal

prejudices and private views, proceed on terms of candor and confidence, from which alone an honorable and beneficial result could be expected. He repeated, that though he possessed an employment of eminence, it was not one of choice; and he trusted, whenever a favorable opportunity offered, he should prove himself not tenacious of power, or desirous of clinging to office; but at present, he felt himself under an obligation to remain in his situation, till a new arrangement should be formed, and not expose the nation to that state of anarchy, which it experienced on a former and somewhat similar occasion*.

Mr. Fox replied to Mr. Pitt, again accusing him of "creeping into power, by unfair and unconstitutional means;" and asserting, that "like every other minister, he ought to resign, when he found he did not possess the confidence of the house of commons." He concluded by declaring, that the house must carry their point; must compel the ministers of the crown to retire; and by avowing a determination to enter into no treaty with them, while they continued in office. The resolution was then agreed to, without a division; after which Mr. Fox moved, that the house should go into a committee on the state of the nation, on the 29th, to which day they adjourned.

When that day arrived, Mr. Fox expressed his concern that circumstances had not changed since their last meeting. He arraigned Mr. Pitt's conduct in the severest terms; he repeatedly accused him of exercising the power, which he had obtained, by unconstitutional means, for corrupt purposes,

* Mr. Pitt alluded to the long ministerial interregnum after lord Shelburne's resignation.

particularly in the late creation of peers*; of despising and setting at defiance a majority of the house of commons; of promoting jealousy and mistrust between the king and his parliament; and of keeping the country without an effective government. He said, that though his (Mr. Pitt's) haughtiness, obstinacy, and temerity, might, if continued, hereafter justify the strongest measures; at present, he recommended moderation;—and therefore he proposed, that the house should adjourn to Monday, on which day, should nothing occur to give public affairs a more favorable aspect, it would certainly be necessary to resume the committee on the state of the nation. The few days respite, which such an adjournment would afford, might, it was true, be employed no better than those which were past had been. He trusted, however, that the well-meant endeavors of such as wished to produce something like an union, would not prove again abortive†. But he was bound in conscience, once for all, to declare, that while the present ministers retained their situations, every effort of that kind, however laudable and well intended, must be useless and unavailable.

Mr. Pitt followed Mr. Fox: he said, "that he did not rise to oppose the motion, but felt himself called upon to state, in very express terms, his objections to the mode of arraignment, thus constantly adopted by gentlemen on the opposite side of the

* Lord Camelford, the duke of Northumberland created lord Lovaine with remainder to his second son, lord Carteret, and lord Eliot. In this speech Mr. Fox acknowledged, that his majesty would not allow his late ministers to recommend any persons to be made peers.

† This alluded to meetings of independent country gentlemen, at the St. Alban's tavern, to effect, if possible, an union between Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox; an account of which will be given hereafter.

CHAP. IV. 1784.

house. To that very high language, thus personally addressed to him, he would only oppose his simple assertion, as no more argument was used on one side, than he should affect on the other. Indeed, he was confident the house would think with him, that such a torrent of criminating assertions could not, by any facts whatever, be established. He was conscious to himself, that no part of his public life, or official conduct, stood in the least need of apology. The delicacy of his present situation required discretion. He was determined to sustain it with as much firmness and decency as he could. This resolution was the result of deliberation; and no invective or aspersion, which the right honorable gentleman could throw out, should divert him from the line he had hitherto pursued. He could only act in so far as his own judgment directed him. This direction, he trusted, would not lead him into any very palpable error; and while he retained a confidence of that kind, it was in vain to expect he would be intimidated by any open attack, or cajoled by any secret artifice. The right honorable gentleman, in saying, that he and his colleagues did not possess the requisites of a legal administration, was mistaken; as they had certainly every formality which belonged to them as the servants of the public. The epithets, therefore, so well calculated to throw an odium on them, were improperly applied; for whatever the right honorable gentleman might think of a majority, he (Mr. Pitt) would not allow, that in every case a majority was to prescribe what, in such and such circumstances, it was proper for ministers to do. He did not believe there was a constitutional power in the house of commons, to control the royal prerogative. He rather thought,

that every branch of the legislature was instituted to secure the legal and constitutional exercise of the functions and privileges of the other. He hoped, therefore, that it would never be contended, that the sovereign, in creating peers or choosing his ministers, must first ask leave of that house. The right honorable gentleman had also said, that there was now no government in the country, an allegation to which he would give a direct negative. What! were ministers of no use but to attend their duty in parliament? Was there no official business to be transacted of a public and national description without the walls of the house of commons? And whether thôse measures and schemes, which depended on the assistance and concurrence of parliament, were or were not suspended, undoubtedly other matters, however inferior they might be thought, came under their inspection and control. The right honorable gentleman had exerted his utmost to paint his (Mr. Pitt's) conduct in the worst light; but still he was willing to stand forth in his own vindication. Nothing could be imputed to him, of which he had any reason to be ashamed. His heart, his principles, his hands were pure; and while he enjoyed the conscious satisfaction of his own mind, no language of the right honorable gentleman—no clamor—no artifice of party—no unfounded imputation, should affect him. He had already stated his conduct fully and explicitly; and he trusted, that the reasons he had assigned for whatever might seem peculiar in his situation, were satisfactory to the house. Lord North answered Mr. Pitt; and, after speeches from lord Nugent and Mr. Fox, the house adjourned to Monday.

During these transactions, addresses, similar to those from the corporation and merchants of London, were presented to the king, agreeably to Mr. Pitt's expectation, from various parts of the country, strongly expressive of confidence in the present ministers; condemning both Mr. Fox's India bill, and the violent proceedings of the house of commons, in consequence of his dismissal from office, and promising support to his majesty, in the exercise of his constitutional prerogatives. It was now evident, that the nation was taking a warm interest in the political struggle which was depending, and that Mr. Pitt, and the principles upon which he was acting, were daily becoming more popular.

It has been observed, that the day Mr. Pitt presented his India bill, Mr. Powys, in an incidental way, expressed a wish, that Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox could be induced to act together as colleagues in the same administration; but he considered this as by no means a probable event. In subsequent debates, the same wish was mentioned by several persons, more pointedly, and with greater hope of success; and on the 26th of January, three days after the rejection of Mr. Pitt's India bill, a meeting for the purpose of promoting this object, was held at the St. Alban's tavern, to which Mr. Fox alluded in his speech, on the 29th. Fifty-three members of the house of commons, chiefly independent country gentlemen, attended; and it was unanimously agreed, that a written communication, signed by all who were present, recommending an union of parties, should be made to the duke of Portland and Mr. Pitt. Conformably to this resolution, Mr. Grosvenor, the chairman, who was member for Chester, the honorable Mr. Marsham, sir

William Lemon, and Mr. Powys, who were county members, as a committee, waited upon the duke and Mr. Pitt, with the following statement: — "We whose names are hereunto signed, members of the house of commons, being fully persuaded, that the united efforts of those, in whose integrity, abilities, and constitutional principles, we have reason to confide, can alone rescue the country from its present distracted state, do join in most humbly entreating his grace the duke of Portland, and the right honorable William Pitt, to communicate with each other, on the arduous situation of public affairs; trusting, that by a liberal and unreserved intercourse between them, every impediment may be removed to a cordial co-operation of great and respectable characters, acting on the same public principles, and entitled to the support of independent and disinterested men." To this communication, Mr. Pitt replied, "That he should be very happy to pay attention to the commands of so respectable a meeting, and co-operate with their wishes to form a stronger and more extended administration, if the same could be done with principle and honor." And the duke of Portland replied, "That he should think himself happy in obeying the commands of so respectable a meeting, but the greatest difficulty to him, and he imagined a still greater to Mr. Pitt, was, Mr. Pitt's being in office."

The meetings were continued at the St. Alban's tavern, and several notes and letters passed between Mr. Grosvenor and Mr. Pitt, and between Mr. Grosvenor and the duke of Portland. Mr. Pitt at once declared, "that there was no difficulty on his part, in the way of an immediate intercourse with the duke of Portland, on the subject of an union:" but the duke of

Portland declined meeting Mr. Pitt, while he continued in his ministerial capacity, notwithstanding the resolution of the house of commons of the 16th instant. Mr. Pitt refused to resign; and each firmly adhering to his determination, the gentlemen of the St. Alban's tavern had the mortification to find, that so far from effecting the desired junction, they could not even prevail upon the two leaders to have a personal interview. Unwilling, however, to abandon their project, they had recourse to higher authority. On the 2d of February, they unanimously agreed, that their chairman should that day move a resolution in the house of commons, relative to an union of parties; and accordingly, as soon as the house met, Mr. Grosvenor rose, and said, that as nothing could tend more effectually to destroy the country than intestine divisions, so nothing could tend more effectually to retrieve the credit of the nation, and render it respectable in the eyes of Europe, and formidable to its enemies, than an union of all the able and great men in the kingdom; and a coalition on a broad basis of all the contending parties, which at that moment divided the house. To effect such an union, had been the object of many respectable country gentlemen, who wishing to avert the dangers, that might well be apprehended from the divisions, which had of late prevailed, had met several times, in order to devise means of bringing about so desirable an end. Several of them had separately recommended union in the house; but the recommendation of individuals had hitherto been without effect. It was the wish, therefore, of the gentlemen, to whom he had alluded, that a resolution should be offered to the house, which, if adopted, would of course have that weight, which did not

attend a recommendation from any number of individuals, in their separate and private capacities. A motion to that effect had been drawn up, which he had shewn to many gentlemen; and he was happy to find, that there was not one who had seen it, who did not declare, that it gave him perfect satisfaction; he hoped, therefore, that it would now meet with the concurrence of the whole house. He concluded by moving, "That it is the opinion of this house, that the present arduous and critical situation of public affairs requires the exertions of a firm, efficient, extended, united, administration, entitled to the confidence of the people, and such as may have a tendency to put an end to the unfortunate divisions and distractions of the country." After several members had spoken, Mr. Fox rose, and said, that he should, with the utmost readiness, give his support to the motion; but his speech was little calculated to forward that union, which the resolution pronounced to be necessary in the present state of affairs. He represented the motion as implying a complete approbation of all those steps which the conduct of ministers had imposed on him and his friends, and which they would not depart from, till ministry set them an example, by relinquishing their situations: he reprobated the addresses which had been lately presented to the king, in favor of the present ministers, as not containing the real sentiments of the public; and asserted, in direct contradiction to the language he held during lord North's administration, that there was no other legal way of learning what the general voice was, but by the votes in the house of commons: He affirmed, that the mode by which Mr. Pitt came into office, was unconstitutional; that his retaining office contrary

to the sense of a majority of the house of commons, was also unconstitutional; that he was the creature and supporter of an influence unknown to the constitution; and that his conduct tended to put the crown in a situation of dictator to that house: he accused him of obstinacy, and of preferring his own understanding to the collected wisdom of the house; as making a breach between the legislative and executive branches; and as causing the king to squabble and contend with the house of commons, on whom he depended, from whom his supplies originated, and without whom his prerogatives would be insignificant and useless.

To these assertions and charges, Mr. Pitt, with great composure, replied, that he intended to agree with the right honorable gentleman over against him, in giving his hearty assent to the motion before the house; but it was rather a gloomy presage of that union so strongly recommended, that the very first time he happened to agree with him, it was upon grounds and for reasons the most opposite. He was, he said, induced to vote for the motion, because he did not think that it made the resignation of his majesty's present ministers by any means a necessary preliminary to a treaty for an union; but on the contrary, that it saved the honor of the house, without exposing the country to the anarchy of being left without a government. He admitted, that in the present critical situation of affairs, a firm, efficient, extended, and united administration, was absolutely necessary to the country—but then the union must be founded upon principle and upon honor; and any proposal for an union, inconsistent in his judgment with principle and with honor, he would most

certainly oppose. As to the sense of the people of England, with regard to the late proceedings in parliament, and change of ministers, it would not perhaps be decent for him to say so much as might be said upon that subject: but thus much he would venture to say, that he was perfectly satisfied in his own mind, that the sense of the people was in favor of the late change of ministers. With regard to a resignation before a treaty for an union should take place, he would repeat what he had often said before, that he foresaw the greatest evils to the nation, if his majesty's present ministers should give up their employments; and he made no difficulty in declaring, that neither his principles nor his feelings inclined him to resign under such circumstances: but still so little was he attached to office, that if he should see a strong and well-connected government ready to succeed him, he would cheerfully retire, without a wish to form a part of that government, or a regret at the loss of power.—How paltry then would it be in him to resign, for the sole purpose of treating about returning back to office! The motion passed without a division.

Mr. Coke, member for Norfolk, immediately rose, and after a short speech, moved, "That it is the opinion of this house, that the continuance of the present ministers in their offices, is an obstacle to the formation of such an administration as may enjoy the confidence of this house, and tend to put an end to the unfortunate divisions and distractions of the country." Mr. Dundas objected to this motion, principally upon two grounds; that it was contrary to the wishes of the people, expressed in their late addresses to the throne, and that it was

CHAP. IV. 1794. hostile to the scheme of union, which it was the intention of the former motion to promote. Upon the first point, he said, that the present ministers, whom it was the object of the motion to remove, enjoyed the confidence of the public, in a most honorable and eminent degree; and upon the second, he expressed a hope, that members, who had voted for the last motion, would see an obvious contradiction to it in the present—that they would consider the present motion as unfriendly to the principles of unanimity, and find it impossible to give it their concurrence. Mr. Fox replied to Mr. Dundas, in a speech of increased violence: In noticing what Mr. Dundas had said, relative to the popularity of the present administration, he said, "I will not hesitate to affirm, that there is an intention in ministers to establish themselves on a foundation unfriendly to the constitutional privileges of this house. They court the affection of the people; and on this foundation they wish to support themselves, in opposition to the repeated resolutions of this house. Is not this declaring themselves independent of parliament? Is not this separating the house of commons from their constituents, annihilating our importance, and avowedly erecting a monarchy on the basis of an affected popularity, independent of, and uncontrollable by, parliament? Such a scheme I can view under no other aspect than as a system of the basest tyranny, and calculated to accomplish the ruin of the liberties of the country. Such a system of despotism is indeed the most likely to originate in men, who carry on their schemes by the machinations of dark intrigue, of men who have stabbed the constitution, by means of secret influence in one department of government, and are now

prepared to perpetrate similar assassinations, by methods of the basest corruption in another. I hope, however, that members will attend to these designs of ministers, masked under the most dangerous and imposing appearances, and that they will rescue the country from the hands of those, who are only distinguished by the dirtiness of their political intrigue, and their violations of the privileges of this house. I hope that such ministers will finally see the danger of their situation, and that this house will no longer suffer itself to be insulted by its own moderation." He called upon ministers to descend from their situation, to resign their offices, and to cease any longer to defy the maxims of their ancestors, and to resist the authority of that house; and he intimated, in the language of threat, that "though he and his friends ought to pause with deliberation over every step of their procedure, yet, if ministers persevered in retaining their offices, it would be necessary to adopt measures with proper solemnity, which must finally restore the insulted honor of the house." Towards the end of his speech he again asserted, that Mr. Pitt had sought power through the means of base corruption and dark intrigue, and that he had "prostituted himself into the character of a mean tool of secret influence;" and he concluded with these words, "I call, therefore, on country gentlemen to stand aloof from a ministry, who have established themselves in power by means so unconstitutional and destructive."

Mr. Powys followed Mr. Fox, and declared, that though he had done every thing in his power to prevent the passing of the late resolutions against ministers; that though those resolutions were, in his opinion, hastily proposed, grounded on

CHAP. IV. 1784.

doubtful and unauthenticated premises, and holding out unfair conclusions; and though he thought it hard to condemn a minister untried, and though he approved of the few measures of Mr. Pitt's government, and, in one instance, thought his conduct noble, disinterested, and genuine*; yet, notwithstanding the high opinion he entertained of his abilities and integrity, and the great respect he had for him personally, yet he should vote for the present motion, while the former resolutions remained upon the journals. At the same time, he owned the delicacy of Mr. Pitt's situation, who certainly had a right to vindicate his honor; and he did not wish to see him quit the fortress, in which he was, at present, and come with a servile humility, to deliver the keys of it to its besieger. The right honorable gentleman could not be expected to agree to march out with a halter about his neck; he desired not that he should undergo any disgrace; he had not deserved it. Mr. Powys, reluctant, probably, to vote against Mr. Pitt, at last said, that if Mr. Pitt would move the previous question upon the present resolution, for the purpose of re-considering and rescinding the former resolutions, he would vote with him; if not, thinking as he did, that those resolutions and the present administration ought not to exist together, much as his opinion was adverse to the resolutions, and sincere as the pains had been which he had taken to prevent their passing, he should think that the house could not negative the present motion.

Mr. Pitt disdained to have recourse to the previous question, for the sake of gaining the vote of Mr. Powys. It was more suitable to his open and manly disposition to meet the question

* Mr Powys alluded to Mr. Pitt's disposal of the clerkship of the pells.

fully and fairly; and therefore he immediately rose, and told Mr. Powys, that he declined moving the previous question, as he thought himself bound to give his direct negative to the present motion. He said, however, that he did not comprehend, how any person, who disapproved the former resolutions, could consistently support the present, which rested on the same principles, and was a natural consequence of them. He then adverted to the warm language which Mr. Fox had used, and said, that he had himself, during the whole series of the late extraordinary debates, in which, resolutions personal to himself were moved, endeavored to avoid being caught by the violence of the proceedings, and had preserved as calm and governed a temper as the nature of the case would admit of. Had he been less guarded, the circumstances which had occurred, would have justified him. The house had been carried step by step, as it were, from one resolution to another, without a fair discussion of any one of them, on its own proper merits. The first resolution, the house would recollect, had been passed at the unusual hour of six in the morning, and with little or no debate. The second, in a manner, grew out of the first; and that was immediately followed by a third, which Mr. Fox had desired the house to consider as a corollary to the preceding; and that as such, having voted the former resolutions, they were bound to vote that as matter of course. Thus artfully had the house been kept from examining any one of the various questions, which had been brought forward singly, and had been insidiously led on from one to another, without knowing whither they were to be carried, or at what degree of violence they were to be permitted to stop. He begged them, however,

CHAP. IV. 1784.

to consider the present question as it really was, and to ask themselves, if it was at all likely to further the purpose of the motion, which had been voted that day. For his part, so far from its having such tendency, he could consider it no otherwise than as an effectual bar to the union so much desired by the respectable and independent gentlemen, who had called for such a measure, and had exerted themselves in so laudable a manner to bring it about. The honorable gentleman who spoke last, had talked of the fortress in which he (Mr. Pitt) was situated, and had declared, that he did not wish him to march out of it, with a halter round his neck. The only fortress he knew of, or ever desired to have a share in defending, was the fortress of the constitution. For that he would resist every attack, and every attempt to seduce him out of it, that could be made. With what regard to personal honor or public principle, could it be expected that he should consent to march out of it, with a halter about his neck, change his armour, and meanly beg to be re-admitted, and considered as a volunteer in the army of the enemy? To put himself into such a predicament, and to trust to the foe to loosen and take from his neck the halter, which he was expected to march out with, was a degree of humiliation to which he would never condescend; and he spoke not merely for himself, but for much greater men with whom he acted, and whose sentiments upon the subject, he was persuaded he delivered distinctly. After speaking upon this point, in a style of spirited eloquence, he said, wishing as he did to meet the desires of the respectable and independent gentlemen, by acceding to an union upon principle, he had done every thing in his power

to facilitate such a measure; that the sacrifice of the sentiments of men of honor, was no light matter; and when it was considered how much was to be given up, in order to open a negotiation for an union—when it was considered what insulting attacks had been made, and what clamors had been excited, he conceived some regard ought to be paid to his being willing to comply with the wishes of the respectable individuals, who had called for an union of parties. To accomplish that object, was a matter greatly to be desired; and for that, and for that alone, was he ready to encounter the disagreeableness, which, after what had passed, must necessarily be supposed to be felt by him in acceding to the proposition. With regard, however, to the resignation of ministers, he must repeat, that he saw no reason for it. If that house insisted upon their going out, there were two constitutional means open to them; either to proceed by impeachment against them for their crimes, if they had committed any, or, by an immediate address to the crown, to desire their removal. The removal of ministers lay with the crown, and not with the house: their remaining in office, therefore, with a view to keep the country free from anarchy and confusion, and to prevent the government from falling a prey to that administration which had been removed, and who were ready to force themselves upon the sovereign against his will, was neither illegal nor unconstitutional; there being no law, or any principle of the constitution, which required ministers to resign, because they had not the support of that house. Mr. Pitt enlarged upon these ideas for some time, and when he sat down, the house

CHAP. IV. 1784. divided upon the question, which was carried by a majority of 223 to 204.

Whoever considers the nature of this motion, and the intemperate and offensive language with which it was supported, must be convinced, that Mr. Fox and his friends had, at this moment, no real desire to unite with Mr. Pitt. They trusted to their majority; and knowing that a dissolution could not take place for several weeks, as there did not now remain time for a new parliament to meet, and pass a mutiny bill, before the 25th of March, they confidently expected, that by harassing Mr. Pitt with hostile motions, they should compel him to resign, without condition or compromise, and reinstate themselves in the full and undivided possession of power. Having, however, found that he paid no regard to the resolutions of the house, while they merely remained upon the journals, they determined to go one step farther.

On the 3d, Mr. Coke expressed his concern, that ministers had not yet resigned; and after desiring that the two resolutions, which had passed the preceding evening, might be read, he moved, "That the said resolutions be humbly laid before his majesty, by such members of this house, as are of his most honorable privy council."—This motion produced a debate, in which neither Mr. Pitt, lord North, nor Mr. Fox, took any part, except that Mr. Fox said a few words upon a point of order; but several members spoke with great warmth, on both sides. Mr. Wilberforce, in objecting to the motion, said, that the house of commons had no right to interfere with the executive power in the appointment or dismissal of ministers; and

that he had not approved of the conduct of the opposite side of the house, from the beginning: it had been divided into parts, with an intention secretly and blindly to commit the house, and to carry it on from measure to measure; because the leaders well knew, that it was only by those means that it could have been brought to its present violent proceedings. It was averred, that ministers had come into office by unconstitutional means; and he wished to inquire into the truth of that assertion. What were the circumstances? A noble person was said to have given advice to his sovereign, on a bill passing through the upper house. This advice he gave, without going in the dark, without taking any secret midnight opportunity of gaining the royal ear. He had done it publicly, and therefore, in his mind, fairly. There was nothing unconstitutional in this; for it was a matter perfectly understood, that his majesty had, by the constitution, a number of hereditary counsellors, besides the particular persons, who were for the time being his confidential servants. And then, adverting to the charge, that the royal word had been made use of to influence the votes of the bedchamber lords, he asked, What had this to do with the appointment of the present ministers? If the East India bill had passed the house of lords, with as great a majority as it did the house of commons, still he should have thanked the crown for dismissing the late ministers. They had, in his mind, shewn themselves unworthy the confidence of the country; and his majesty was entitled to the gratitude of his people, for dismissing a set of ministers, capable of bringing into parliament such a bill. In the course of his speech, Mr. Wilberforce said, that Mr. Fox, by his coalition

CHAP. IV. 1784.

with lord North, "had lost all confidence, all political reputation, all popularity."—At the end of the debate, Mr. Powys said, that though he should vote for the motion, he did not hesitate to pronounce Mr. Pitt the first political character in the country; but he was not greater than the constitution. The house of commons had voted, that he ought not to remain in office; and the constitution required, that he should comply with the resolution of that house. He added, that Mr. Pitt had hard measures dealt out to him, but he could not help it; the house of commons must judge for itself. A division took place, and the question was carried by a majority of 24, the numbers being 211 and 187. Upon Mr. Fox's motion, the committee on the state of the nation was then postponed to Monday, to give time for knowing what effect this communication to his majesty would produce; and the house adjourned to Thursday.

It is necessary now to refer to some proceedings in the house of lords. Soon after the Christmas recess, the earl of Effingham called the attention of that house to the resolution of the house of commons on the 24th of December, by which it was declared, as we have seen, that the lords of the treasury ought not to consent, that the East India company should accept certain bills drawn from India, which they were authorized by act of parliament to empower the company to accept. He contended, therefore, that the effect of this resolution was, to supersede the operation of an act of parliament, which no one branch of the legislature had a right to do; such an assumption of power might lead to the most mischievous conse-

quences. He also expressed his disapprobation of the resolution of the house of commons, on the 16th of January, relative to the appointment of the present ministers, and their continuance in office, contrary, as was alleged, to the principles of the constitution. On the 4th of February, his lordship brought forward two motions in the house, one upon each of these subjects: The first motion was, "That an attempt in any one branch of the legislature, to suspend the execution of law, by separately assuming to itself the direction of a discretionary power, which by an act of parliament is vested in any body of men, to be exercised as they shall judge expedient, is unconstitutional." The second motion was, "That, according to the known principles of this excellent constitution, the undoubted authority of appointing to the great offices of the executive government, is solely vested in his majesty; and that this house has every reason to place the firmest reliance in his majesty's wisdom, in the exercise of this prerogative." These two motions gave rise to a long and animated debate, in which all the leading persons of both parties spoke. With respect to the first motion, the lord chancellor asserted, that the house of commons had no right to issue any order to the lords of the treasury, relative to the exercise of a power entrusted to them by act of parliament; and declared, that if he had been a lord of the treasury, he would have disobeyed it, upon this plain principle, that nothing short of an act of parliament, passed by the three estates of the realm, can suspend any part of the statute or of the common law of England. A division took place upon the first motion, which was carried by a majority of 47, the numbers being 100, and 53. The second motion passed

CHAP. IV. 1784. without a division. Lord Effingham, afterwards, on the same day, moved an address to the king, founded upon the second resolution, which was agreed to without a division. The address was as follows:

"We, your majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the lords spiritual and temporal, in parliament assembled, acknowledge, with great satisfaction, the wisdom of our happy constitution, which places in your majesty's hands the undoubted authority of appointing to all the great offices of executive government. We have the firmest reliance in your majesty's known wisdom and paternal goodness, that you will be anxious to call into, and continue in, your service, men the most deserving of the confidence of your parliament, and the public in general. In this confidence, we beg leave to approach your majesty, with our most earnest assurances, that we will, on all occasions, support your majesty in the just exercise of those prerogatives, which the wisdom of the law has entrusted to your majesty, for the preservation of our lives and properties, and upon the due and uninterrupted exercise of which must depend the blessings which your people derive from the best of all forms of government."

This address was presented by the house, to his majesty, on the next day; and he returned the following answer:

"I thank you for this dutiful and loyal address; and I desire you will rest assured, that I have no object in the choice of ministers, but to call into my service men the most

deserving of the confidence of my parliament, and of the public in general. I cannot too often repeat my assurances, that my constant study, in the exercise of every prerogative entrusted to me by the constitution, is, to employ it for the welfare of my people."

The king, in writing to Mr. Pitt on the day this address was expected to be moved in the house of lords, expressed himself in this manner, after lamenting the length to which the house of commons had gone:—" I trust the house of lords will this day feel, that the hour is come, for which the wisdom of our ancestors established that respectable corps in the state, to prevent either the crown or the commons from encroaching on the rights of each other. Indeed, should not the lords stand boldly forth, this constitution must soon be changed; for, if the two only remaining privileges of the crown are infringed, that of negativing bills which have passed both houses of parliament, and that of naming the ministers to be employed, I cannot but feel, as far as regards my person, that I can be no longer of utility to this country, nor can with honor continue in this island." From this extract, coupled with the conclusion of his former letter, as well as from other authorities, it is evident, that the king had, at this time, serious intentions of retiring to Hanover, in case Mr. Fox and his party should prevail.

No other debate took place in the house of lords, during this long contest. It was thought right, that the house of lords should make a declaration of their sentiments, upon the power assumed by the house of commons, and upon the great

CHAP. IV. 1784.

constitutional question now depending; but that, this being done, they should abstain from any farther proceeding. It would, indeed, have been not only unbecoming their dignity, but a gross dereliction of duty in the hereditary guardians of the constitution, appointed to maintain a just equilibrium in the state, had they remained silent spectators of what was going on in the house of commons; but, on the other hand, to interfere so far as to make themselves parties in the dispute, might have led to a breach between the two houses; which all, who recollected the history of the preceding century, and whose first object it was to preserve to each branch of the legislature, its respective rights and privileges, were wisely anxious to avoid. This patriotic moderation was perfectly conformable to the sentiments and advice of Mr. Pitt, who was of course consulted concerning the line of conduct to be pursued in the house of lords, upon this important occasion. It was, however, no small satisfaction to him to find, that while he was opposed by a majority in one house of parliament, the members of the other declared in his favor, in the proportion of nearly two to one; more especially, as his adversaries boasted of being supported by most of the great aristocratic families in the kingdom*.

I now return to the proceedings of the house of commons, which met, according to its adjournment, on Thursday, the

* Some years afterwards, the head of one of the oldest families in the kingdom, and of the highest rank, and who had been an uniform opponent of Mr. Pitt, said to me, in conversing upon this struggle, "Mr. Pitt beat the whole aristocracy of the country."

fifth of February, when lord Hinchingbrook informed the house, that he had had the honor of laying their resolutions, of Monday last, before his majesty, who had ordered him to acquaint the house, that he would take them into consideration.

The members of opposition in the house of commons, did not think it right to call in question the truth or propriety of the second of the two motions, which had passed the house of lords the preceding evening; but lord Beauchamp, rising immediately after lord Hinchingbrook had delivered his majesty's message, complained of the first of these motions, denominating it an "unwarrantable attack upon the privileges of the house of commons." He said, that it was incumbent upon the house to take some notice of that motion; and therefore, as the regular mode of bringing it before them, he moved, "That a committee be appointed to examine the journals of the house of lords, with respect to any proceedings or resolutions of that house, relating to any resolutions of this house, of the 24th of December, and of the 12th and 16th days of January last, and to make report thereof to the house." Mr. Pitt said, that he had no objection to the motion, and acknowledged that the mode adopted by lord Beauchamp, was strictly parliamentary, and conformable to the practice of the house. He said, he was unwilling to anticipate what might be the subject of future debate; but he desired to remind the noble lord, that the resolution of the 24th of December, passed when he himself (Mr. Pitt,) and other persons now in office, were not members of the house, and consequently had not the power of resisting it. This observation called up Mr. Fox, who spoke at some

CHAP. IV. 1784.

length, and with his usual warmth, although the motion was not opposed. In the course of his speech he said, that he had long suspected, and the history of the last three weeks confirmed his suspicions, that there was a plan in this country, a conspiracy, to sink the importance of the house of commons, and vilify them to their constituents, and to the world. There was a settled design somewhere, to render the commons subservient to the will of the crown, and, consequently, useless to the constitution. He remarked, that it was the constant practice of ministers, when they found themselves supported by the house of commons, to exaggerate its power, and its consequence; but when the house happened to be in opposition to ministers, then it was cried down, then the prerogative of the crown was mentioned in lofty strains; and the lords were called upon to vindicate their right, which they were prompted to believe was invaded by the exercise of the most constitutional powers of the house of commons. Thus, praised when they supported ministers, vilified and traduced when they opposed them, the commons must at last be rendered contemptible in the eyes of the public, and unfit for any one of the purposes, for which they formed a branch of the legislature. To render the house of commons contemptible, and consequently useless, was the obvious wish and object of those who had entered into the conspiracy against it. The life of the house of commons was aimed at: of this he declared, upon his honor, he entertained not a doubt; and when he spoke of the house of commons, he did not mean the house then sitting, but the house of commons in an abstract sense, as forming one of the three great branches of the legislature. If this was not the

design of the conspirators, would the world have seen that phenomenon in this country, a minister insulting the house of commons, by daily appearing on the treasury bench as a minister, after the house of commons had declared, they could place no confidence in him; and after they had laid before his majesty their resolutions, by way of advice to the crown, to remove him and his colleagues? And would the house of lords have been called upon, to enter into resolutions against the house of commons, if there had not been a settled design to insult and trample upon them? Was it not known, that in his majesty's cabinet there were not wanting those, who were not the warmest friends to the constitution, in its present form? Was it not known, that there were, in high legal situations * in this country, persons, who held, and avowed in public, principles the most abhorrent to the constitution? Could, then, the house rest at ease under these circumstances?

To this part of Mr. Fox's speech, Mr. Pitt replied, "Equally well founded were the two assertions, that there was a conspiracy to destroy the house of commons, and that there were in his majesty's council some persons, he knew not how many exceptions the right honorable gentleman might make, who were hostile to the present constitution. There might possibly be persons so credulous as to believe these idle and absurd assertions, and to such persons it would be in vain to say any thing. The right honorable gentleman, however, had gone so far as to point out a learned lord, high in a legal office, as a person, who holds in public, principles the most opposite to the constitution. He wished the right honorable gentleman

* Lord Thurlow, lord chancellor, was the person to whom Mr. Fox alluded.

CHAP. IV. 1784.

was less fond of general insinuation, and that he would be pleased to state distinctly some of the expressions of that noble lord, on which he might be tried, on which he might defend himself. Until the right honorable gentleman should produce some specific charge, he should not attempt to defend a character, which stood equally above censure and panegyric."

Mr. Dundas reminded Mr. Fox, that not long since he had formed part of an administration with that learned lord, of whom he now thought so ill, and that he used to call him "a very manly man." Mr. Fox confessed, that he did not always remember his own expressions, and that he might have called the learned lord by that name. He concluded by saying, with a liberality which often broke forth in the midst of his greatest warmth, "that he did the right honorable gentleman, at the head of the treasury, the justice to say, that he did not believe him to be one of those, who aimed at the life of the house of commons."

Lord Beauchamp's motion having passed unanimously, the committee appointed to inspect the journals of the house of lords, presented their report on the 6th; and on the 9th, lord Beauchamp, for the purpose of evincing, that the house of commons had, in the case in question, acted agreeably to its practice on subjects of a similar nature, moved, "That a committee be appointed to examine into the usage of either house of parliament to interpose, touching the exercise or non-exercise of discretionary powers, vested in the servants of the crown, or in any body of men, for public purposes, and to report the same to the house." This motion passed without any observation.

The order of the day, for going into a committee on the state of the nation, being then called for, governor Johnstone rose, and desired, that Mr. Fox would produce his India bill, which some time since he had declared to be ready; and asserted, that his not bringing it forward was the cause of the stagnation of public business. Mr. Fox, aware that his India bill, if introduced a second time, would not be supported by the same majority in the house of commons as before, and that it would unquestionably be rejected again by the house of lords, replied, that his bill was not ready, and avowed his opinion, that it ought not to be introduced in the present unsettled state of political affairs. He denied, that he was the cause of the stagnation of public business, which, he said, was to be attributed to "the obstinacy of a desperate set of men, who persisted in the retention of their offices, notwithstanding the house had declared, that they did not possess its confidence." He then stated, that as the king had signified his most gracious intention to take into consideration the resolutions of the house of commons, lately communicated to him, he wished the house to wave all farther proceedings, till the effect of its former resolutions upon the royal mind should be fully known; and therefore he proposed, that the order of the day, for going into a committee upon the state of the nation, should be postponed to Friday next. This motion, after a conversation relative to some of the addresses lately presented to the king, and to Mr. Fox's inconsistency in maintaining opposite doctrines in the years 1780 and 1784, in which Mr. Pitt took no part, passed unanimously, and the house adjourned to the following day.

It was mentioned in the account of the parliamentary proceedings of last year, that Mr. Pitt gave a decided and effectual support to the receipt tax, an unpopular measure of the then administration. In the present session, lord John Cavendish, while chancellor of the exchequer, had introduced a bill to enforce and render that tax more productive; but it had made very little progress, when he quitted office. Though Mr. Fox and his party now wished to stop all other public business, they determined to push forward this bill, hoping, that if Mr. Pitt supported it, he would make himself unpopular; or, if he opposed it, that he would incur the imputation of inconsistency. Accordingly, on the 10th of February, a motion was made, that the bill should be committed. Mr. Pitt declared, that he should vote for the motion; and announced his intention of delivering his farther sentiments upon the subject, in the committee, which, it was agreed, should take place on the following Thursday.

This point being settled, Mr. Pitt moved, that the report from the committee upon the ordnance estimates, should be brought up. Mr. Fox said, that if it were intended, that the report should be then brought up, and that it should be considered on some future day, he should not oppose the motion; but if it were intended to take the estimates into consideration immediately, he should oppose the motion, because he did not think it proper to vote supplies, until it should be known what answer his majesty would give, or whether he would give any at all, to the resolutions which had been communicated to him. When some information on that head should have been given, then it would be for the house to consider what measures

ought to be adopted: but to give the sanction of the house to the resolutions of the committee of supply on the ordnance estimates, under present circumstances, would be to carry on the most important business, and to execute the highest, and now the only undisputed, privilege of the house of commons, (how long it might remain so, he could not tell,) that of voting money, while there was, in reality, no government in the country; or, which might be deemed worse, a government existing in defiance of that house. He understood, that there was an intention to re-commit the report; to this he had no objection; but he hoped, that no motion would be made for taking the report into consideration, before Friday.

Mr. Pitt replied, that though a formal answer was not to be expected from his majesty, in consequence of the communication lately made to the throne, as in case of an address, still no doubt it was necessary, that by some means or other, the house should be informed what line of conduct his majesty intended to pursue; and, certainly, such information would be given. Respecting the report from the committee on the estimates, he observed, that the house was not then full enough to debate so serious a question, as whether the supply should be stopped. He would, therefore, after the report should be received, move, that it be re-committed to-morrow; and the house might receive the report on Thursday. Mr. Fox said, that "if by stopping the supply, the right honorable gentleman meant refusing the supply, he would tell him, that nothing was farther from his intention; but if by stopping, he meant suspending, he would tell him, that he thought the house ought to suspend it, until his majesty's intentions should be known.

CHAP. IV. 1784. Lord Beauchamp objected to the proposed arrangement for the ordnance estimates, because his motion stood for to-morrow; but, after a tedious conversation, it was agreed, that the ordnance estimates should be re-committed to-morrow, and that lord Beauchamp should make his motion on Thursday.

As soon as the house met on the next day, Mr. Eden referred to the report from the committee appointed to take into consideration the frauds upon the revenue, and, after a short speech, in which he complained of the present state of public affairs, and said, as he had done upon a former occasion, that the country had only a nominal ministry, he moved, "That this house doth agree with the committee in the said resolution, that it appears that the illicit practices used in defrauding the revenue, have increased in a most alarming degree; that those practices are carried on upon the coasts, and in other parts of this kingdom, with a violence, and with outrages, which not only threaten the destruction of the revenue, but are highly injurious to regular commerce and fair trade, very pernicious to the manners and morals of the people, and an interruption to all good government; that the more secret and illicit practices in the internal excise of this kingdom, have also greatly increased; that the public revenue is defrauded to an extent of not less than two millions per annum; and that these enormities and great national losses, well deserve the earliest and most serious attention of parliament." To this motion, which was probably brought forward for the purpose of shewing that the state of the revenue required a settled administration, Mr. Pitt gave his consent, at the same time expressing his conviction, that nothing but very strong measures could put

a stop to the fraudulent practices, which had now risen to so formidable and mischievous a height; and declaring, that it would be the duty of the house to take this important subject into their most serious consideration, as soon as circumstances would permit.

Mr. Hussey, who had been a member of the committee, then rose, and urged the enormous and increasing frauds upon the public revenue, as one reason for immediately forming an efficient and united administration, which might correct the alarming evil. He hoped that Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox would make concessions not only to each other, but to the exigencies of their country, which, while they were contending, felt the consequences to its vitals. He lamented, that the endeavors of the gentlemen, who met at the St. Alban's tavern, for the purpose of effecting this desirable object, had hitherto been unsuccessful; and he called upon Mr. Marsham, who had taken the chair, in consequence of Mr. Grosvenor's indisposition, to read a resolution, which had lately passed at their meeting, and which, he thought, deserved the serious attention of the house. Mr. Marsham expressed himself willing to comply with Mr. Hussey's request, though he did not feel it to be a pleasant thing to be called upon in so marked a manner, to rise in the house. He said, that an union of all the virtues and abilities, which the country possessed, was the cordial and unanimous wish of the gentlemen who met at the St. Alban's tavern, and that to this object all their exertions were directed. After expatiating upon the abilities of Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox, and dwelling upon the importance of their cordially uniting in government, he informed the house, that the resolution alluded

CHAP. IV. 1784. to, was to the following effect: "That an administration, founded on the total exclusion of the members of the last, or of the present administration, would be inadequate to the exigencies of the public affairs."

Mr. Fox rose immediately, and spoke with greater moderation than upon any late occasion. He said, that, on his part, there was no personal animosity or spleen, which could stand in the way of a general and substantial union of parties; and he trusted, that Mr. Pitt's mind was equally free from every objection of that kind. He mentioned several circumstances, both in the internal state of the country, and in respect to foreign relations, which called for an able, active, and industrious ministry, possessing the confidence both of parliament and of the crown. He paid many compliments to Mr. Pitt's abilities: he respected what he had always understood to be his political principles, none of which did any one whom he had consulted, wish him to renounce. The union he wished to see take place was, an union of principle. There could, in his apprehension, be no personal contention between Mr. Pitt and himself. He expressed a full conviction, that Mr. Pitt was not slavishly attached to the emoluments of office; and he spoke of Mr. Pitt's ambition as a noble and magnanimous passion, a love of glory, a desire of reputation, grafted on the advantages, which, he trusted, the country would one day reap from his exertions in her service. He flattered himself, that the house would give him credit for the same disinterestedness and the same honorable ambition. Thus far he thought their dispositions not dissimilar; and he acknowledged that Mr. Pitt always appeared to him as aiming at the same great and desirable objects as

himself, and to act upon the same truly glorious, truly patriotic, and truly constitutional grounds. After this candid and conciliatory language, which it would be difficult to reconcile with what Mr. Fox said upon other occasions, he proceeded to state, that as on this subject, however, he wished to conceal nothing, he would say, that the only suspicion in his mind, and which originated in the mode by which Mr. Pitt obtained and kept possession of power, was, that he entertained an opinion, that the crown might appoint a ministry, and persist in supporting them, who had not the confidence of the house of commons. He wished he might find the suspicion ill-founded, but he dreaded to find it true; for then an union on such a principle was impossible. He said, that he did not well understand where the difference between himself and Mr. Pitt could lie; and he thought, that in consequence of the plan which he had in contemplation, the principal objections to his India bill, on the ground of patronage, might be removed; but if any discordance of opinion should still continue on that head, he saw no impropriety in submitting even that to the discussion and judgment of parliament. The only obstacle, then, which remained, was the present situation of Mr. Pitt and his party. He assured the house, as a man of honor, that he saw no other hindrance to the union which had been urged, than that now stated, which, being removed, he and Mr. Pitt might co-operate cordially; and the only struggle between them would be, an honorable emulation, which should do his country the most essential service. But he declared, that he would never treat with men, while they refused to treat on constitutional grounds; that he meant only to support the

constitutional consequence of the representatives of the people of England; and that a negotiation which admitted a precedent, so destructive of it, was inconsistent with his personal honor, and with his duty to his country.

Mr. Pitt followed Mr. Fox; and in the course of his speech, declared, as to union, it was not possible that any man should wish for it more sincerely than he did, provided it could be effected upon principle and with honor. The right honorable gentleman, he said, had been pleased to mention a subject, in the beginning of his speech, which, in his opinion, ought to be the last consideration, if an union, upon principle, could be obtained, and that was, the consideration of personal arrangements. These were not to be thought of as a matter, respecting which there either could, or ought to, be any difficulty. He said, he had no right to expect the right honorable gentleman to abandon his friends, or to desert his connexions. He certainly had no such right; and yet, upon an occasion like the present, he should neither do justice to himself, nor act fairly by the right honorable gentleman, if he did not speak without reserve. With regard to animosity, undoubtedly he entertained none against any man breathing; it was not, therefore, from animosity, or any personal pique, that he said, there might be persons, whose private character he respected, and whose abilities were eminent, with whom he could not possibly, upon public grounds, bring himself to act, or to sit in the same cabinet*. If such persons there were, and they would consent to sacrifice their views, and to remove out of the way of union, they would do themselves honor, and deserve

* Mr. Pitt alluded to lord North.

the thanks of their country. The right honorable gentleman has said, an union might take place, in which one minister might look to the right for confidence and support, and another to the left; but he thought a minister ought to look to both: he ought to look for the confidence of his sovereign, and for the confidence of that house—he would go farther; he ought to look for the confidence of the house of lords, and of the people. He had said to the house before, and he would repeat it, that there was no law of this kingdom, which made it criminal in him to remain in office, notwithstanding a resolution of the house of commons. He would, however, admit, that the confidence of that house was so far necessary, that no administration could last, which did not possess it. With respect to the resignation looked for by the right honorable gentleman, as a preliminary to a treaty, he did not hesitate to say, that he and his colleagues were ready to resign, the moment there should be a prospect of an administration being formed, by whom the country might be effectually served. But when he considered the duty he owed to his sovereign and to the people, he could not reconcile it either to that duty, or to his own honor, to resign sooner. With respect to the India bill, there were points, which he had hitherto maintained, and from which he felt not the least disposition to recede; and if the part he had taken in coming into office had produced no other good than that of defeating a measure, which threatened ruin to the constitution of the country, he should ever think that he had done a meritorious service. If such alterations should be made by the right honorable gentleman, as would remove the grounds of his apprehensions for the constitution,

CHAP. IV. 1784.

he should find great consolation even in this, though other parts should remain in the bill, to which his objections were as strong as ever.

Lord North immediately said, it was impossible for him not to perceive, that Mr. Pitt alluded to him as the person with whom he could not act; and, though evidently hurt by this exclusion, he declared, in a manly and dignified manner, that he would not be an obstacle to the formation of that stable, extended, and united administration, which the present distracted state of the country required. Several members returned thanks to lord North for his public-spirited conduct; and, after this long digression, Mr. Eden's motion passed unanimously. The house then resolved itself into a committee of supply; and after a tedious conversation, relating principally to the expediency of building fortifications for the protection of our dock yards, the ordnance estimates were voted without a division; and it was agreed, that the report should be received on Friday.

On the following day, lord John Cavendish moved, that the house should resolve itself into a committee on the receipt tax act, and a division took place, upon the question for the speaker's leaving the chair, which was carried by 162 to 33; Mr. Pitt voting in the majority, and thus declaring his approbation of the principle of the bill. Several amendments were proposed, to which he gave his assent, and they were adopted.

The house being resumed, lord Beauchamp made a report from the committee, to whom it had been referred to examine the journals, and search for precedents, relative to instructions given by that house, to persons vested with a discretionary

power, touching the exercise or non-exercise of that discretion. The report contained a great number of precedents; and as soon as it was read by the clerk, Mr. Dundas observed, that it was impossible, at that moment, to determine how many of the precedents applied to the case in question, and that some delay was necessary, to allow gentlemen time to look into the history of the transactions, on which the precedents were founded: he therefore moved, that the report should be printed, which motion passed without a division; and it was agreed, that the report should be taken into consideration on the Monday following.

On that day, lord Beauchamp, after expatiating upon the precedents referred to in the report, moved six resolutions, in which it was asserted, that the house of commons had not assumed to itself any right to suspend the execution of law; that the resolution of the 24th of December, relative to the acceptance of bills from India, was conformable to the principles of the constitution—agreeable to the usage of parliament in such cases—founded in a sense of duty towards the people of the kingdom—dictated by a becoming anxiety for the preservation of the revenue and the support of public credit—and called for by the unsettled and embarrassed state of the East India company; and that the house of commons would persevere in maintaining its own privileges, without encroaching on those of either of the other branches of the legislature. In the course of the debate which followed, Mr Pitt, in replying to Mr. Fox, noticed the strong terms of asperity and indignation in which he had condemned the conduct of the house of lords; and accused him of endeavoring

CHAP. IV. 1784.

to make a breach between the two houses of parliament: he disapproved of the resolution of the 24th of December; but as there was some ambiguity in its meaning, he thought, that in the present state of things, it would be best to move the previous question; the matter, he said, would then stand thus;—the house, though they had passed the resolution, now felt a conviction of its impropriety, and, without entering into any explanation of their conduct, confessed its inconsiderate tendency, by refusing to take notice of the censure they had received. This was the moderate way of proceeding, and this was the mode which he preferred, as he did not wish to imitate the right honorable gentleman, all whose professions were for peace, temper, and moderation, but whose measures were for the reverse. The right honorable gentleman was for ever talking about the moderation of his conduct, and for ever charging him, and his friends, with all the heat and intemperance which occurred in that house; and yet, though this was his constant language, it was never his practice. Mr. Pitt declared himself to be a friend of order and concord. The great desire and object of his heart was unanimity, if it could be procured on public principles, and on grounds, upon which men of honor could stand. The house divided upon Mr. Pitt's motion for the previous question, which was lost by a majority of 29: the numbers were 186 and 157. This being a business upon which the house stood pledged, and which related in some degree to its privileges, this small increase in the majority ought not, perhaps, to excite surprise. Lord Beauchamp's six resolutions afterwards passed without a division; and the house adjourned to the 18th.

As soon as the house met on that day, Mr. Pitt rose, not, as he said, to deliver a regular message from the king, but merely to inform the house, that his majesty, after a full consideration of the resolutions of that house, which had been communicated to him, and of all the circumstances with which they were connected, had not thought proper to dismiss his ministers; nor had the ministers resigned. Mr. Fox immediately expressed his astonishment and concern at this declaration of Mr. Pitt, which he acknowledged to be distinct and explicit. He said, that the situation of the country was new, and extraordinary indeed.—That the house of commons had never before received such an answer from a prince of the Brunswick line, a flat and peremptory negative to their sentiments and wishes. He alluded, in marked terms, to the times of Charles the first, in which, as in the present contest, the house of commons was at variance with the other branches of the legislature *; and asserted, that the want of confidence between the house of commons and administration, was the cause of the many calamities which happened in some of the reigns prior to the revolution. He affirmed, that there was now a settled plan for governing the country, without a house of commons, and independently of the people; but he trusted, that the firmness and magnanimity of that virtuous and respectable majority, who had gone so far, and done so much, would not fail, on so critical and trying an occasion;—that a direct and avowed defiance was now given to the house; that, under circumstances so novel and

* Had the house of commons now gained the ascendancy, as in the time of Charles the first, the consequence might have been equally fatal to the constitution.

CHAP. IV. 1784.

so unprecedented, he wished to recommend to the house, to pause, and to wave, for a very short time, the question of supplies, which stood for that day, that gentlemen might come on a future day, perfectly awake to the situation, in which they were now placed by his majesty's answer to the resolutions laid before him by order of the house. He said, that this proposition was free from objection, as no mischief or danger could arise from postponing the report of the ordnance estimates. How long it might be proper for the house to maintain a system of moderation and delicacy, he did not know; but he was anxious they should depart from it, in the present stage of the business, as little as possible. That his majesty had a legal right to appoint whom he pleased, and even to continue those whom he had appointed, to be his ministers, in opposition to the sentiments of that house, he pretended not to dispute; but at the same time it should, he said, be remembered, that the house of commons had a right, equally undeniable, to grant and distribute the public money, in the manner, and at the time, they should judge most proper. He then proceeded to state, that as the measures adopted by the house, had not produced their desired effect, others were consequently necessary. What these should be, it did not become him to say, it did not become the house immediately to say. But, in his opinion, something farther was necessary. To stop the supplies, he knew, as well as any other man, was an expedient, which could only be justified by the last extremity. He begged, however, to declare, that he, for one, was not yet ripe to adopt such a strong measure. He was unwilling to use any language, which might be capable of misconstruction; but it was fair

and manly to say, that the design, of ruling the country without the voice of the people, was now obvious. He would readily absolve Mr. Pitt from any imputation of that sort; but he would not so readily absolve those who had secretly advised his majesty to appoint a set of men to the executive government of this country, in opposition to a majority of the house of commons. He was satisfied Mr. Pitt could not be where he was, from choice. Was any one, then, who saw and admired the display of his great and splendid abilities, more sensible of their improper application than he was? He certainly meant no personal disrespect, and he persuaded himself that Mr. Pitt would not take it in that light, when he intimated a suspicion, that he was the dupe of those who were enemies to the constitutional importance of that house. Mr. Fox concluded by repeating, that he wished to allow gentlemen time to reflect upon the steps which had been already taken, and to consider what might be farther necessary to put a proper period to the contest, which had, unhappily, so long interrupted the business of the public; and therefore he moved, that the house should adjourn to the next day.

This speech may be considered as a masterpiece of art and ingenuity. Mr. Fox was convinced, by Mr. Pitt's declaration on that day, for which he was fully prepared, that the resolutions of the house of commons, which had been passed, and communicated to the king, had made no impression, either upon his majesty or upon Mr. Pitt; and therefore it now remained for him to ascertain, whether the majority, which he had hitherto commanded, would support him in still more violent measures. The ordnance estimates afforded him a fair oppor-

CHAP. IV. 1784.

tunity of making an experiment, with respect to stopping the supplies; but he was aware that this was a point which required to be touched with the utmost delicacy. And accordingly he said, that he had not himself determined whether it would be right to proceed to such a length; and that, being doubtful what line of conduct it would be proper for the house to adopt, in its present new and unprecedented situation, he was desirous that gentlemen should have time to consider and reflect upon what they had just heard from Mr. Pitt. All that he positively affirmed was, that something was necessary to be done. Leaving it, therefore, open to himself to act as he should hereafter see expedient, he had recourse to the plausible proposal of adjournment to the next day only; a delay, from which it was impossible that any inconvenience could arise to the public service. Mr. Fox well knew, that he could not divide the house upon a question, in which any impediment to the supplies was concerned, more moderate in itself, or resting upon more specious and less exceptionable grounds. At the same time, the result would fully answer the purpose which he had immediately in view, and which was of the utmost moment to him, namely, to be able to form a judgment of the temper and disposition of the house, upon the grand subject of withholding the supplies. In one part of his speech, he endeavored to alarm; in another to conciliate; in a third, he threatened. He represented, that there was a settled design to annihilate the importance of the house of commons, in order to persuade members, that by supporting the present ministers, they were contributing to their own degradation and insignificance; but as Mr. Pitt's character and well-known principles

would exempt him from any imputation of that sort, he ascribed this design solely to an interior cabinet, to secret advisers, of whom Mr. Pitt was the unconscious tool and instrument. This might be said with a view also to rouse, as Mr. Fox would call it, the spirit of Mr. Pitt, of whose eloquence and talents he spoke in terms of high commendation: and to obviate any objection or prejudice against himself, he declared his anxiety for pacific measures, and asserted his love of moderation. He admitted that he might be some times warm in debate, but contended, that no one could point out any instance of violence or inconsiderateness in his public conduct. He even allowed the right of the king to nominate his own ministers, and to continue them in office, although that concession could not be reconciled with his former assertion, that Mr. Pitt was the unconstitutional minister of the crown.

Mr. Powys followed Mr. Fox, and supported his motion, representing it as "temperate, and as the only means of giving the house a breathing time, in the prospect that a compromise might be brought about, which he still thought practicable. He said, that the house must support its own resolutions; that he wished on a subsequent day to propose a moderate measure, namely, that the house should either present an address to the king, or pass a resolution, declaring their confident hope, that his majesty would take measures, which should give effect to their resolutions. He professed, that he had still the highest opinion of Mr. Pitt, and retained the most perfect reliance upon the patriotism and integrity which he had uniformly shewed; trusting that he would yet deliberately consider the merits of his situation, and yield to the pressing calls of his country. It

was the saying of a distinguished writer: That there were some men, whose abilities were born with them; some men, who achieved abilities; and a third set, upon whom abilities were thrust. These, the writer said, were the three orders of able men; and all these three distinctions of ability, in his opinion, met and were combined in Mr. Pitt. He had the greatest respect for him; and in taking the part which he did upon the present occasion, he by no means intended opposition personally to him."

Mr. Pitt, in his reply to Mr. Fox and Mr. Powys, said, "an attempt has been made to color the putting off the supplies, as if it were only the pause of a moment, and that this pause was occasioned by a circumstance which the house had not foreseen, and which put parliament, the country, and public affairs in quite a new situation. Allowing all this to be true, which he would not allow but for the sake of argument, how could such an explanation make any alteration in facts, which the least discerning might see through? The supplies were, to all intents and purposes, stopped. The right honorable gentleman affects to call it postponing; but he trusted the public would see the trick attempted to be put upon them, and upon the house. It was too shallow to have effect. It could not, he was well persuaded, succeed against the good sense of the people of this country. But why would not gentlemen come openly and plainly forward? He was sure no man would doubt, that he allowed the right of the house of commons to withhold the supplies, whenever the circumstances of the case would justify such a measure; but he hoped no man would say, that the present was a crisis of that kind. He contended,

that his majesty not having dismissed his ministers, because that house, without a trial, had thought proper to condemn them, was not a sufficient reason for calling that right into exercise. The right honorable gentleman, conscious that he was in reality stopping the supplies, was, very prudently and consistently, unwilling to push the question. It was then only, that the conduct of his majesty's ministers could be fully investigated. It was on that ground, and for that end, he would urge the going into the question; and he challenged those on the other side to meet it fairly, openly, and without disguise or subterfuge. For, in that discussion, the different motives of the contending parties would appear; and he would say, with the utmost confidence and sincerity, that it was a discussion for which he was anxious, as he knew from the temper and principles of the house, that the facts which would be substantiated, and the truths which would be established, would make them reluctant, indeed, to withhold the supplies, on which the harmony and energy of government depended, and for which the national faith was pledged."

"Many of the right honorable gentleman's arguments had been addressed personally to him; but with what propriety, gentlemen of feeling and delicacy would judge. There were points, he observed, in personal honor, which no man of spirit could for any object whatever forego; and whatever were his connections or attachments, he hoped never to forfeit feelings, without which he could not retain consistently any opinion of himself. He would, therefore, declare, once for all, that he considered his personal honor deeply and inseparably concerned in the situation which he at present held; and that he

CHAP. IV. 1784.

would not, on any account, or by any means, first resign, and then stoop to negotiate: that would be, to leave his place in order to make part of a new administration. What! would he tell the world by such a step as this, that he was capable of sacrificing every thing to the love of power? No; it did not become him to trifle in this manner, either with his own character, or with his majesty's confidence. But he was told, that at present he was connected with persons who contaminated him. Would this be anywhere else believed? And what was the meaning of all these repeated personalities, but that he should relinquish one set of men, in whom he trusted, and knew he could trust with safety, for another; that he should begin to serve his country, by doing a private injury to those, whom he could not but regard with esteem; that he should be obliged, for a paltry share in office, to sacrifice his personal feelings; and treat those, with whom he had long lived in habits of intimacy and confidence, with a neglect bordering on perfidy? He was convinced, that the house, and the public, those at least who knew him, did not expect him to be capable of purchasing the honor of office at so dear a rate. These were his deliberate sentiments upon a subject, with which he had been much pressed; and he hoped they would be considered as final." The debate was continued to a late hour; and, upon a division, the question for adjournment was carried by a majority of only 12, the numbers being 208 and 196; and thus the receiving of the report of the ordnance estimates, was postponed.

I well remember, that the friends of Mr. Pitt congratulated each other upon this small majority, and that it afforded to

many, who had hitherto desponded, a ray of hope, that he would ultimately triumph. The postponement of the ordnance estimates instantly excited so much alarm without doors, that several members, who had voted for the adjournment, were induced publicly to declare, the next day, that, by so doing, they had no intention to refuse the supplies, but merely wished to allow time for consideration; and to give some color and support to this assertion, Mr. Powys informed the house, that he should, to-morrow, propose a motion, of the nature which he had mentioned yesterday, as a necessary previous measure to the granting of the supplies; he promised, that after his motion should be passed, he would vote for the ordnance estimates. This anxiety in opposition members to disclaim all idea of finally stopping the supplies, arose from a conviction, that such an act would not be endured in the country, and that it might affect their re-election, in case of a dissolution; and the small majority, upon the proposal to defer one branch of the supply, by no means the most important, only for a single day, rendered it certain, that the house of commons would not consent to any strong motion upon that subject. Even Mr. Fox said, that "he thought last night, and thought still, that the supply ought not to be withheld; but he thought also, that it ought not to be voted unconditionally. Some measure ought previously to be taken, such, for instance, as that which had been alluded to by the honorable gentleman who spoke last but one (Mr. Powys). Upon the adoption of some measure of that kind, he was ready to vote the supply, relying with the utmost confidence, that his majesty would attend to the voice of his faithful commons, and gratify those wishes, with which their anxiety for the constitution inspired them."

Mr. Pitt declared, "that he would not enter into any compromise; he would not stipulate any condition for the passing of the supply. When any proposition should be submitted to the house, it would be for the house to dispose of it as they should think proper; but he would never make a compromise upon the subject." Mr. Fox replied, that he wanted no compromise, and desired the right honorable gentleman to remember that he (Mr. Fox) was not pledged to vote for the supply: he thought it ought to be voted; but, at the same time, he thought the vote ought to be preceded by some other; without which, he was of opinion, the supply ought still to be postponed a little longer; and the more so, as this particular supply was not in its nature very pressing. The conversation continued for some time, but at last Mr. Fox proposed, that the committee on the state of the nation should be deferred till Monday; soon after which the house adjourned.

On the next day, Mr. Powys, after a speech of some length, moved the following resolution: "That this house, impressed with the most dutiful sense of his majesty's paternal regard for the welfare of his people, relies on his majesty's royal wisdom, that he will take such measures as may tend to give effect to the wishes of his faithful commons, which have been already most humbly represented to his majesty." This resolution, in its present shape, being considered by Mr. Fox's party, as not sufficiently pointed to the object, which they had more immediately in view, Mr. Eden moved, as an amendment, that after the words "measures as," the following words should be inserted, "by removing any obstacle to the formation of such an administration as this house has declared to be requisite, in the present critical and arduous situation of public affairs." It

being agreed, that this amendment, which aimed at the dismissal of ministers, should form part of the motion, a long debate ensued, in which Mr. Pitt delivered the following speech, in reply to Mr. Fox, who, in the course of his speech, had reprobated the numerous addresses lately presented to the king, in support of ministers, and had said, that if ministers persevered in their obstinacy, it would be justifiable in the house to withhold the supplies:

"The right honorable gentleman, Sir, has gone through so vast an expanse of matter; he has embarked the house in so wide an ocean of politics, that it is impossible for me to follow him through the whole course of his speech. I beg leave, however, while both the house and myself are fresh in the recollection of it, to press upon them again, what the right honorable gentleman himself, at the close of his speech, has this day, at last, been driven to confess, though I had long labored, and, as I began to fear, had labored in vain, to convince him of it, namely, that if the right honorable gentleman, and the noble lord in the blue ribbon, should regain their situation, their restoration would not ensure the restoration of peace, of happiness, and of content to this distracted country. The right honorable gentleman now confesses it; and yet, sir, he ought also to confess, and to know and feel, that his present measures do most directly tend to the re-establishment of that coalition, to the certain exclusion of his majesty's present ministers, and to that very calamity, which he himself now begins to dread, and with the dread of which I had so strenuously endeavored to inspire the house. Procrastination is now become his plan.

CHAP. IV. 1784. I wish not to be understood as calling out for violent measures; but this I will say, that merely to temporize, is no man's duty at the present moment. If, therefore, every violence is intended against this administration, let us not keep the country in suspence, but let us advance, like men, to the issue of this contest. The present question is weak and feeble, compared with those which have gone before it; and I dare say, therefore, every gentleman must expect that it will be without effect.

"The right honorable gentleman, sir, has appeared to-night in a character perfectly new to him, but which he has supported (as, indeed, he supports every one of his characters,) with wonderful dexterity; he is, to-night, the champion of the majority of this house, against the voice of the people. 'Imposture' was the word used by his learned friend; the right honorable gentleman improves upon the idea, and tells you, that 'imposture' was a word used merely by way of civility. It is by way of complimenting the people of England, that the right honorable gentleman says, their opinions are founded in imposture; and then by way of libelling these addresses, and of libelling this reign, he recals to your mind the addresses offered in the infamous reign of king Charles the second, affecting to furnish the house with a case somewhat in point; and warning them not to trust at all to the most unanimous addresses of the people of England, by summarily mentioning those which were offered to that monarch, requesting the crown to take into its hands and protection, the several charters of this country. Sir, I beg these allusions may not pass off unexplained; the case was this:—after many cruel and scan-

dalous decisions in the courts, against chartered companies, in a fit of desperation, the several corporations offered their charters to the crown, as the only protection against this tyranny; and shall I hear this cited by way of libelling the addresses of the people at this time? I believe, in truth, sir, the right honorable gentleman is surprised and exasperated at the manly spirit of the people in these times, who will not wait till their charters are prostituted to the purpose of ministers, and then seek relief by yielding them to the crown; but who boldly resist the violation in the first instance, and who are as hardy in their resistance, as the right honorable gentleman has been in his attack.

"But, says the right honorable gentleman, how should the people understand the India bill? Do they know all the abuses in India? True, sir, the people may not have read all your voluminous reports; neither, perhaps, have one half of the members of this house read them; but, sir, they know that no correction of abuses in India, not even the rescuing India from loss or annihilation, could compensate for the ruin of this constitution. The plain sense of this country could see that objection to the India bill, which I could never persuade the right honorable gentleman to advert to; they could see that it raised up a new power in this constitution; that it stripped at once the crown of its prerogative, and the people of their chartered rights; and that it created that right honorable gentleman the dictator of his king and his country.

"But, sir, the right honorable gentleman ventures still to deny, that the addresses have sufficiently marked what is the opinion of the people; and then he talks of battles at Reading,

CHAP. IV. 1784. of battles at Hackney, and battles at Westminster. At Reading, sir, I understand there was no battle; the county addressed unanimously, against the opinion, and in the face of its members, although the honorable member (major Hartley) assures you, how he exerted his oratory to deprecate the address. As for Hackney, I behold over against me a most valiant chieftain (Mr. Byng *,) who is just returned from that field of Mars; whose brow, indeed, is not, as before, adorned with the smile of victory, but from whose mouth, I doubt not, we shall hear a faithful, although, alas, sir, a most lamentable history of that unfortunate flight and defeat. Whether at Westminster, it is sufficient proof of victory, to say, 'the people would not even hear me:' whether that right honorable gentleman (Mr. Fox †,) who once could charm the multitude into dumb admiration of his eloquence, and into silent gratitude for his exertions in the cause of freedom, and of his country; whether he, the champion of the people, once emphatically named the 'man of the people,' is now content with the execrations of those multitudes, who once, perhaps, too much adored him; whether, in short, sir, the sonorous voice of my noble friend ‡, was a host itself, or whether it might not have become a host, by being joined to the voices of the host around him, all these are points I will not decide; but sure I am, that the right honorable gentleman will not persuade me, that the voice of the people is with him, if Westminster is his only example. There is one thing the right honorable gentle-

* Mr. Byng was one of the members for Middlesex, and a partizan of Mr. Fox.

† Mr. Fox was member for Westminster.

‡ Mr. Pitt alluded to lord Mahon.

man proves, merely by strong affirmations; to which, therefore, I can only oppose affirmations as strong, on my part. He says, his late majorities have been composed of men the most independent in their principles, respectable in their situations, and honorable for their connexions: I can only affirm, as roundly, in answer, that the minority is by no means inferior to them, in point either of principles, of respectability, or of independence. Having thus disposed of the people, and of the minority in the house of commons, large as it certainly is, the right honorable gentleman proceeds next to dispose of the majority in the house of lords, and he denies that they were respectable. Sir, if the right honorable gentleman will trouble himself with this kind of calculation, I am not afraid to match the majority there against the minority, either on the score of independence, of property, of long hereditary honors, of knowledge of the law and constitution, or on the score of any thing that can give respect and dignity to peerage. And, Mr. Speaker, when I look near me [looking at Mr. Pratt,] when I see near whom I am now standing, I am not afraid to place in the front of that battle (for at that battle the noble peer, whom I allude to, was not afraid to buckle on his old armor, and march forth, as if inspired with his youthful vigor, to the charge;) I say, sir, I am not afraid to place foremost, at the head, and in the very front of that battle, that noble and illustrious peer (lord Camden,) venerable as he is for his years, venerable for his abilities, adored and venerated through the country, on account of his attachment to this glorious constitution, high in rank and honor, and possessing, as he does, in these tumultuous times, an equanimity and dignity of mind, that render

CHAP. IV. 1784. him infinitely superior to that wretched party-spirit, with which the world may fancy us to be infected.

"But, sir, I am carried away too far; my warm admiration of the subject has hurried me into expressions, perhaps, not perfectly becoming the strictness of this debate. The point which I should particularly speak to, and the great subject of contention between us, is, whether I shall resign, in order afterwards to return into office; and the example of the noble lord in the blue ribbon, is held out for my imitation; for he, it is said, is willing to sacrifice his personal pretensions for the sake of unanimity. Good God! Mr. Speaker, can any thing that I have said, subject me to be branded with the imputation of preferring my personal situation, to the public happiness? Sir, I have declared, again and again, only prove to me, that there is any reasonable hope, shew me but the most distant prospect, that my resignation will at all contribute to restore peace and happiness to the country, and I will instantly resign. But, sir, I declare, at the same time, I will not be induced to resign as a preliminary to negotiation; I will not abandon this situation, in order to throw myself upon the mercy of that right honorable gentleman. He calls me now a mere nominal minister, the mere puppet of secret influence. Sir, it is because I will not become a mere nominal minister of his creation—it is because I disdain to become the puppet of that right honorable gentleman, that I will not resign; neither shall his contemptuous expressions provoke me to resignation: my own honor and reputation, I never will resign. That I am now standing on the rotten ground of secret influence, I will not allow; nor yet will I quit this ground, in order to put myself, as the right honorable

gentleman calls it, under his protection, in order to accept of my nomination at his hands, and in order to become a poor, self-condemned, helpless, unprofitable minister, in his train—a minister, perhaps, some way serviceable to that right honorable gentleman, but totally unserviceable to my king and to my country. If I have, indeed, submitted to become the puppet and minion of the crown, why should that right honorable gentleman condescend to receive me into his band? It seems, however, that I have too much of the personal confidence of my sovereign; and that I must resign, in order to return into administration, having only an equal share of it with others. But the right honorable gentleman knows that my appointment would, in that case, be only as a "piece of parchment." Admit, that I have more than my share of the king's confidence, yet how is my being out of office two days, to make any diminution of that confidence? The right honorable gentleman, therefore, every moment, contradicts his own principles, and he knows, that if I were first to resign, in the forlorn hope of returning as an efficient minister into administration, I should soon become the mere sport and ridicule of my opponents; nay, and forfeit also the good opinion of those, by whose independent support I am now honored; for when I shall have sacrificed my reputation for that support, which I am told shall arise to me, from that right honorable gentleman's protection; when I shall have bartered my honor for his great connections, what shall I become, but the slave of his connections, the sport and tool of a party? for a while, perhaps, the minister appointed by that party, but no longer useful to my country, or myself independent.

"The right honorable gentleman tells you, sir, that he means not to stop the supplies again to night, but that he shall only postpone them occasionally. He has stopped them once, because the king did not listen to the voice of his commons; he now ceases to stop them, though the same cause does not cease to exist. Now, sir, what is all this, but a mere useless bravado?—a bravado calculated to alarm the country, but totally ineffectual to the object for which it was intended. I grant, indeed, with him, that if all the money destined to pay the public creditors, is voted, one great part of the mischief is avoided. But, sir, let not this house think it a small thing to stop the money for all public services; let us not think, that, while such prodigious sums of money flow into the public coffers, without being suffered to flow out again, the circulation of wealth in the country will not be stopped, nor the public credit affected. It has been said, indeed, 'How is it possible that parliament should trust public money in the hands of those, in whom they have expressly declared they cannot confide?' Is there any thing, then, in my character so flagitious? Am I, the chief minister of the treasury, so suspected of alienating the public money to my own, or to any other sinister purpose, that I am not to be trusted with the ordinary issues? [a cry of, no, no!] Why, then, sir, if they renounce the imputation, let them renounce the argument. By what I am now going to say, perhaps I may subject myself to the invidious imputation of being the minister and friend of prerogative; but, sir, notwithstanding those terms of obloquy with which I am assailed, I will not shrink from avowing myself the friend of the king's just prerogative. Prerogative, sir, has been justly called a part

of the rights of the people; and sure I am it is a part of their rights, which the people were never more disposed to defend, of which they never were more jealous, than at this hour. Grant only this, that this house has a negative in the appointment of ministers, and you transplant the executive power into this house. Sir, I shall call upon gentlemen to speak out: let them not come to resolution after resolution, without stating the grounds on which they act; for there is nothing more dangerous among mixed powers, than that one branch of the legislature should attack another, by means of hints and auxiliary arguments, urged only in debate, without daring to avow the direct grounds on which they go; and without stating, in plain terms, on the face of their resolutions, what are their motives, and what are their principles, which lead them to come to such resolutions. Above all, sir, let this house beware of suffering any individual to involve his own cause, and to interweave his own interests, in the resolutions of the house of commons. The dignity of the house is for ever appealed to: let us beware, that it is not the dignity of one set of men; let us beware, that personal prejudices have no share in deciding these great constitutional questions. The right honorable gentleman is possessed of those enchanting arts, whereby he can give grace to deformity; he holds before your eyes, a beautiful and delusive image—he pushes it forward to your observation; but as sure as you embrace it, the pleasing vision will vanish, and this fair phantom of liberty will be succeeded by anarchy, confusion, and ruin to the constitution. For, in truth, sir, if the constitutional independence of the crown is thus reduced to the very verge of annihilation, where is the

CHAP. IV. 1784.

boasted equipoise of the constitution? Where is that balance among the three branches of the legislature, which our ancestors have measured out to each, with so much precision? Where is the independence—nay, where is even the safety of any one prerogative of the crown, or even of the crown itself, if its prerogative of naming ministers, is to be usurped by this house; or if (which is precisely the same thing) its nomination of them, is to be negatived by us, without stating any one ground of distrust in the men, and without suffering ourselves to have any experience of their measures? Dreadful, therefore, as the conflict is, my conscience, my duty, my fixed regard for the constitution of our ancestors, maintain me still in this arduous situation. It is not any proud contempt, or defiance of the constitutional resolutions of this house; it is no personal point of honor; much less is it any lust of power, that makes me still cling to office: the situation of the times requires of me, and I will add, the country calls aloud to me, that I should defend this castle; and I am determined, therefore, I will defend it."

Notwithstanding this spirited, eloquent, and forcible speech, the motion, as amended by Mr. Eden, was carried by a majority of 197 to 177.

Mr. Fox having found, that the resolutions of the house, even when communicated to the king in the usual manner, by privy counsellors, were entirely fruitless, determined to advance still a step farther, and to try the effect of an address solemnly presented to his majesty on the throne, by the whole house; and, therefore, he immediately moved an address to the king, founded upon the above resolution, which, after

another debate, was carried by 177 to 156. The address was as follows:

"We, your majesty's most faithful commons, impressed with the most dutiful sense of your majesty's paternal regard for the welfare of your people, approach your throne, to express our reliance on your majesty's royal wisdom, that your majesty will take such measures, as, by removing any obstacle to forming such an administration as this house has declared to be requisite in the present critical and arduous situation of affairs, may tend to give effect to the wishes of your faithful commons, which have already been most humbly represented to your majesty."

Mr. Fox afterwards moved, that this address should be presented to the king, by the whole house, which was carried without a division.

The report of the ordnance estimates was then brought up, which being agreed to without any debate, the house adjourned between five and six in the morning.

The unanimous adoption of Mr. Grosvenor's motion, by the house of commons, on the 2nd of February, was considered as an encouragement to the gentlemen who met at the St. Alban's tavern, to renew their endeavors to accomplish an union of parties. Several meetings were held; and some of the members, as a committee, had interviews with Mr. Pitt, and with Mr. Fox and the duke of Portland, on the subject. But the same difficulty as before, occurred, namely, that Mr. Pitt refused to resign, for the purpose of negotiating; and the duke of Portland

CHAP. IV. 1784.

and Mr. Fox refused to negotiate till Mr. Pitt had resigned. On the 9th of February, the gentlemen appear to have been convinced, that from their inability to surmount this difficulty, their exertions at present must be useless, and they passed a resolution to that effect. They agreed, however, to meet at least once a week, during the session of parliament, for the purpose of availing themselves of any opportunity which might present itself, of promoting the great object which they deemed "absolutely necessary at that particular juncture."

What passed in the house of commons, on the 11th of this month, in the irregular debate which took place upon Mr. Eden's motion, again revived the hopes of these gentlemen; and at a meeting two days afterwards, they unanimously passed the two following resolutions:—"To represent to the right honorable William Pitt, and to the right honorable Charles James Fox, the satisfaction we have received from the manly, candid, and explicit avowal they have respectively made of their public views; and to intimate to them, that, in consequence of this mutual explanation, we entertain a most assured hope, that such an administration as the house of commons has unanimously declared to be requisite, may be obtained by an union consistent with principle and honor:" and, "That the thanks of this meeting be given to the right honorable Frederick lord North, for the public and voluntary declaration he has made, of his sincere and earnest desire to promote, as far as depends on him, a cordial and permanent union."

In consequence of the eagerness for an union of parties, repeatedly expressed by these gentlemen, and also by many others in the house of commons, Mr. Pitt, desirous that no

backwardness upon the subject should be imputed to him, thought it right, as the most probable means of accomplishing the wishes of so many respectable men, to advise the king to propose an interview between the duke of Portland and himself (Mr. Pitt,) for the purpose of endeavoring to form an administration including themselves and their respective friends. This suggestion was received by his majesty, with considerable surprise and agitation; and the next morning he wrote to Mr. Pitt the following letter, dated Feb. 15th, 1784:

"Queen's House, 30 M. past 10 A. M.

"Mr. Pitt is so well apprized of the mortification I feel at any possibility of ever again seeing the heads of opposition in public employments, and more particularly Mr. Fox, whose conduct has not been more marked against my station in the empire, than against my person, that he must attribute my want of perspicuity in my conversation last night, to that foundation, yet I should imagine it must be an ease to his mind, in conferring with the other confidential ministers this morning, to have on paper my sentiments, which are the result of unremitted consideration, since he left me last night, and which he has my consent to communicate, if he judges it right, to the above respectable persons.

"My present situation is perhaps the most singular that ever occurred, either in the annals of this or any other country; for the house of lords, by a not less majority than near two to one, have declared in my favor; and my subjects at large, in a much more considerable proportion, are not less decided; to combat which, opposition have only a majority of twenty,

CHAP. IV. 1784.

or at most of thirty, in the house of commons, who, I am sorry to add, seem as yet willing to prevent the public supplies. Though I certainly have never much valued popularity, yet I do not think it is to be despised, when arising from a rectitude of conduct, and when it is to be retained by following the same respectable path, which conviction makes me esteem that of duty, as calculated to prevent one branch of the legislature from annihilating the other two, and seizing also the executive power, to which she has no claim.

"I confess I have not yet seen the smallest appearance of sincerity in the leaders of opposition, to come into the only mode by which I could tolerate them in my service, their giving up the idea of having the administration in their hands, and coming in as a respectable part of one on a broad basis; and therefore I, with a jealous eye, look on any words dropped by them, either in parliament, or to the gentlemen of the St. Alban's tavern, as meant only to gain those gentlemen, or, if carrying farther views, to draw Mr. Pitt, by a negotiation, into some difficulty.

"Should the ministers, after discussing this, still think it adviseable, that an attempt should be made to try, whether an administration can be formed on a real, not a nominal, wide basis, and that Mr. Pitt, having repeatedly, and as fruitlessly, found it impossible to get even an interview on what opposition pretends to admit is a necessary measure, I will, though reluctantly, go personally so far as to authorize a message to be carried in my name to the duke of Portland, expressing a desire that he and Mr. Pitt may meet to confer on the means of forming an administration, on a wide basis, as the only

means of entirely healing the divisions which stop the business of the nation. The only person I can think, from his office, as well as personal character, proper to be sent by me, is lord Sydney; but should the duke of Portland, when required by me, refuse to meet Mr. Pitt, more especially upon the strange plea he has as yet held forth, I must here declare, that I shall not deem it right for me ever to address myself again to him.

"The message must be drawn on paper, as must every thing in such a negotiation, as far as my name is concerned; and I trust, when I next see Mr. Pitt, if, under the present circumstances, the other ministers shall agree with him in thinking such a proposition adviseable, that he will bring a sketch of such a message, for my inspection.

"GEORGE, R."

In consequence of this permission from the king, which was evidently given with great reluctance, lord Sydney, on the same day, wrote to the duke of Portland, signifying, "his majesty's earnest desire, that his grace should have a personal conference with Mr. Pitt, for the purpose of forming a new administration, on a wide basis, and on fair and equal terms." The duke of Portland considered this message as tantamount to a virtual resignation on the part of ministers, and therefore as a removal of the obstacle which had hitherto prevented an interview between himself and Mr. Pitt. But no sooner was this difficulty removed, than another was started by the duke of Portland. The royal message spoke of "forming an administration on fair and equal terms;" his grace did not object to the word "fair"—it was a general term, and he and

CHAP. IV. 1784.

Mr. Pitt, in framing the arrangements, might discuss whatthey considered to be fair: but the word "equal" was more specific and limited; and as a necessary preliminary, he required Mr. Pitt to inform him, what he understood by the word "equal." Mr. Pitt said, he thought the meaning of that word would be best explained at a personal conference. The duke replied, that he could not meet Mr. Pitt, till the word was explained. Mr. Pitt declined explaining it; and thus the negotiation was finally broken off. Mr. Powys and Mr. Marsham were the persons, through whom these communications, relative to the meaning of the word "equal," passed; and the other gentlemen of the St. Alban's tavern, finding from their statement, that recent endeavors to accomplish an union of parties were as fruitless as former ones; that the "earnest desire" of the king had no better effect than the unanimous resolution of the house of commons; and utterly despairing of success from any farther application, after various consultations, at last came to this concluding resolution:—"This meeting having heard with infinite concern, that an interview between the duke of Portland and Mr. Pitt, is prevented by a doubt respecting a single word, are unanimously of opinion, that it would be no dishonorable step in either of the gentlemen to give way, and might be highly advantageous to the public welfare." No notice whatever was taken of this resolution, and the meetings were discontinued.

Without inquiring, whether this association, which, if it had succeeded in its object, would, in reality, have prescribed to the king, what persons his majesty ought to take into his counsels, was strictly reconcileable to the principles of our

constitution, we may pronounce, that the intention, with which it was formed, was truly laudable and patriotic. It originated in a sincere desire, upon public grounds, to see the great abilities of Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox united in the service of their country; and to accomplish that purpose, every exertion was made. But, perhaps, it indicated no correct knowledge of human nature, to expect that two such men, circumstanced as they were, would co-operate cordially and permanently. To compel persons to act together, with the same common views, and to concur in promoting the same common end, especially if the business be complicated and arduous, is always but a hopeless undertaking; and, in the present case, those who were most acquainted with the characters of the individuals, and best qualified to form a right judgment of the probable result, looked upon the attempt, from the first, as idle and unpromising: the little progress which was made, justified that opinion. The negotiation was occasionally used as a pretence for deferring the proceedings of the house of commons; but at no one moment was there reason to believe, that it would be brought to a successful termination. Not even the preliminaries could be adjusted. The men, who were to act with harmony and mutual confidence, as members of the same administration, at the very outset of the treaty, betrayed symptoms of jealousy, suspicion, and distrust: Those who, by candid and friendly communication, were to settle the contending claims of the different candidates for office, could not be prevailed upon so much as to meet in the same room, though commanded by his majesty to have a personal conference, and called upon to unite, by the unanimous vote of the house of commons—those who were to agree upon points of the utmost

nicety and importance, upon the general principles of government, and all the intricate detail of foreign and domestic policy, could not rely upon each other's interpretation of one of the commonest words in the language.

THE report from the committee on the receipt tax bill was brought up on the 24th; and, after Mr. Pitt had declared his sentiments in favor of the measure, the house divided upon the question of agreeing to the amendments, which was carried by a majority of 39: the numbers being 51 and 12. The bill passed without any farther opposition. It does not appear, that Mr. Pitt lost any part of his popularity, by giving his full and uniform support to this obnoxious tax, either in the last or in the present session; and his manly and consistent conduct certainly raised his credit in the house of commons.

ON the 25th, the house of commons presented the address, which had been voted on the 20th; and his majesty returned the following answer, in which he alluded to the failure of his endeavors to effect an union of parties:

"I am deeply sensible how highly it concerns the honor of my crown, and the welfare of my people, which is the object always nearest my heart, that the public affairs should be conducted by a firm, efficient, united, and extended administration, entitled to the confidence of my people, and such as may have a tendency to put an end to the unhappy divisions and distractions of the country.—Very recent endeavors have already been employed on my part, to unite in the public service, on a fair and equal footing, those whose joint efforts appear to me

most capable of producing that happy effect: those endeavors have not had the success I wished. I shall be always desirous of taking every step most conducive to such an object; but I cannot see that it would in any degree be advanced by the dismission of those at present in my service.—I observe, at the same time, that there is no charge or complaint suggested against my present ministers, nor is any one or more of them specifically objected to; and numbers of my subjects have expressed to me, in the warmest manner, their satisfaction in the late changes I have made in my councils *. Under these circumstances, I trust my faithful commons will not wish, that the essential offices of executive government should be vacated, until I see a prospect, that such a plan of union as I have called for, and they have pointed out, may be carried into effect."

A motion successfully made by lord Beauchamp, on the 25th, to adjourn to the 27th, prevented the house meeting on the 26th. Mr. Pitt and his friends were not aware of this manœuvre; the pretence for which was, to allow time to consider what step ought to be taken, in consequence of his majesty's answer to the address, but its real object was, to delay public business.

When the house met on the 27th, the speaker read the king's answer, and lord Beauchamp immediately moved, that the consideration of it be postponed to Monday. Mr. Pitt said, that he was then ready to discuss the king's answer; but if the gentlemen on the opposite side wished the consideration of it to be deferred till Monday, he did not object. He acknow-

* Alluding to the numerous addresses to that effect, from all parts of the country.

CHAP. IV. 1784.

ledged that he had advised the answer, and that he was responsible for it. The motion, after some conversation, was agreed to, without a division. Lord Beauchamp then moved, that the house do now adjourn to Monday; evidently with a design to postpone the navy estimates, which were to be brought forward this day. Mr. Pitt objected to the motion, upon the ground of its stopping public business, which had already been very much interrupted. He stated, that when it was expected the navy estimates would have been brought forward on Wednesday last, a noble lord moved to adjourn. This day, when the same business was again expected, the same noble lord has moved to adjourn; and on Monday, the consideration of the king's answer will be brought forward, still to put off the business of the supply. Where will this end? Gentlemen are desirous of being thought ready to grant the supply; but that readiness is to be found only on their lips, not in their actions. A short debate ensued, in which Mr. Marsham and Mr. Powys said, they would vote for postponing the supply, though they would not ultimately refuse it, as they knew that it was the wish of the people, that the supply should be granted. The question of adjournment was carried, by a majority of only seven; the numbers being 175, and 168. This was the smallest majority by which Mr. Fox and his party had hitherto carried any motion; and they did not venture to make any attempt afterwards to obstruct the supplies.

It cannot have escaped the notice of the reader, that Mr. Fox was by no means consistent, in what he said at different times, relative to stopping the supplies. The fact seems to have been, that he was himself ready to proceed to that length; but from

the first, he suspected, that several members of independent character, and of weight in the house, who had hitherto voted with him, would not support him in so violent a measure. He therefore thought it more prudent not to avow his sentiments openly; and in the progress of the business he was convinced, that his suspicions were well founded, which appeared, indeed, from the declaration of Mr. Marsham and Mr. Powys, in this last debate upon the subject.

I must here interrupt the account of parliamentary proceedings, for the purpose of noticing, briefly, a circumstance, which ought not to be passed over entirely in silence.

On the 10th of February, the lord mayor, aldermen, and common council of the city of London, voted their thanks to Mr. Pitt, "for his able, upright, and disinterested conduct, as first lord of the treasury, and chancellor of the exchequer, on the present alarming and critical juncture of affairs;" and they also, at the same time, unanimously voted the freedom of the city of London to be presented to him, in a gold box, of the value of one hundred guineas, "as a mark of gratitude for, and approbation of, his zeal and assiduity in supporting the legal prerogatives of the crown, and the constitutional rights of the people." A committee of the corporation was appointed, to communicate these resolutions to Mr. Pitt; and on the 28th, they went in procession, preceded by the city marshal, and accompanied by the sheriffs and town clerk, for that purpose, to Berkeley-square, where he then resided, with his brother, lord Chatham. Mr. Pitt had been invited to dine on that day with the grocers' company, at their hall, in the Poultry, to

CHAP. IV. 1784. which the committee were to conduct him. Great crowds had been assembled in Berkeley-square, from an early hour in the morning, and a prodigious concourse of people joined the procession, after it left lord Chatham's house. From Temple-bar, the colors of the city, and of the grocers' company, were carried before the procession to grocers' hall, in the midst of the loudest shouts and acclamations. After Mr. Pitt had taken the oath, administered to freemen upon their admission, the chamberlain (Mr. Wilkes) addressed him, in the following excellent speech:

"Sir,

"I give you joy, and I congratulate the city of London, on the important acquisition it has this day made. I reckon it, sir, among the most fortunate events of my life, that I have the honor of being directed, by the unanimous resolution of the lord mayor, aldermen, and common council, to enrol your name in the archives of this metropolis, among those princes and heroes, who have been the benefactors of our country, and the friends of mankind, with the glorious deliverer of this nation, with the hero of Culloden, with the illustrious statesman from whom you derive your descent. The city of London, sir, with pride and exultation, now behold revived in the son, those solid virtues, shining talents, and powerful eloquence, which they long admired in the father, but, above all, that generous love of our country, and its divine constitution, superior to the groveling sordid views of private interest or personal ambition. You have, sir, thus early in your ministerial career, commanded the esteem and admiration of this city and nation,

by a noble act of disinterestedness in favor of the public, for which, I believe, you could scarcely find a precedent, nor, I fear, will you be imitated by any future minister.

" We look up, sir, to that superior ability, and purity of public virtue, which distinguish you, for the reformation of many abuses, as well as the steady protection of our chartered rights, property, and freedom. The administration of your noble father gave us security at home, carried the glory of this nation to the utmost height abroad, and extended the bounds of the empire to countries, where the Roman eagle never flew. A late administration undertook an unjust and wicked war, which dismembered the empire, by depriving us of our most valuable colonies, and has brought us almost to the brink of bankruptcy. To restore this kingdom to any degree of prosperity and greatness, demands the utmost exertions of virtue and ability, with every support both of the crown, and the people at large. I hope you will meet with both, and I know how high you stand in the confidence of the public. Much is to be done; but you have youth, capacity, and firmness. It is the characteristic of a true patriot, never to despair; and we have a well-grounded hope of your making us again, a great, powerful, happy, and united people, by a steady, uniform, wise, and disinterested conduct. Your noble father, sir, annihilated party; and I hope you will, in the end, bear down and conquer the hydra of faction, which now rears its hundred heads against you. I remember his saying, That, for the good of the people, he dared to look the proudest connexions of this country in the face I trust that the same spirit animates

CHAP. IV. 1784. his son; and, as he has the same support of the crown, and the people, I am firmly persuaded, that the same success will follow."

To which Mr. Pitt replied:

"Sir,

"I beg to return you my best thanks, for your very obliging expressions. Nothing can be more encouraging to me, in the discharge of my public duty, than the countenance of those, whom, from this day, I may have the honor of calling my fellow citizens."

When Mr. Pitt returned at night, he was attended, a considerable part of the way, by many respectable persons, besides an immense concourse of people. As the populace were dragging the coach, in which were himself, lord Chatham, and lord Mahon, up St. James's-street, opposite to a club house, frequented by his political opponents, they were suddenly attacked by men, armed with bludgeons and broken chair poles, among whom, were distinguished several members of the club: some of the mob made their way to the carriage, forced open the door, and aimed several violent blows at Mr. Pitt, from which lord Chatham, at his own risque, was very instrumental in protecting him. At length Mr. Pitt and his companions, with great difficulty, made their escape to a neighbouring house, without any material personal injury to themselves; but their servants, and several persons who came

to their assistance, were much bruised, and the carriage was nearly demolished. CHAP. IV. 1784.

We have seen, that the address, presented by the house of commons to the king, on the 25th, requested his majesty, in general terms, to remove any obstacle which might stand in the way of forming such an administration as the house had declared to be requisite, in the present critical and alarming situation of affairs. This address having failed to produce its desired effect, Mr. Fox determined to propose another address to the throne, directly asserting the right of the house of commons to advise his majesty upon the exercise of his prerogatives; and, by virtue of that right, specifically requesting him to dismiss his present ministers. Accordingly, on the first of March, after a very long speech, in which he repeated all the arguments he had used on former occasions, relative to the state of political parties, he moved the following resolution: "That an humble address be presented to his majesty, most humbly to represent to his majesty, the satisfaction his faithful commons derive from the late most gracious assurances we have received, that his majesty concurs with us in opinion, that it concerns the honor of his crown, and the welfare of his people, that the public affairs should be conducted by a firm, efficient, extended, united administration, entitled to the confidence of his people, and such as may have a tendency to put an end to the unhappy divisions and distractions of this country: To acknowledge his majesty's paternal goodness in his late most gracious endeavors to give effect to the object of our late dutiful representation to his majesty: To lament

CHAP. IV. 1784.

that the failure of these his majesty's most gracious endeavors should be considered as a final bar to the accomplishment of so salutary and desirable a purpose; and to express our concern and disappointment, that his majesty has not been advised to take any farther step towards uniting, in the public service, those, whose joint efforts have recently appeared to his majesty, most capable of producing so happy an effect.—That this house, with all humility, claims it as its right, and on every proper occasion, feels it to be their bounden duty, to advise his majesty touching the exercise of any branch of his royal prerogative: That we submit it to his majesty's royal consideration, that the continuance of an administration, which does not possess the confidence of the representatives of the people, must be injurious to the public service: That this house can have no interest distinct and separate from that of their constituents; and that they therefore feel themselves called upon to repeat those loyal and dutiful assurances they have already expressed, of their reliance on his majesty's paternal regard for the welfare of his people; that his majesty would graciously enable them to execute those important trusts, which the constitution has vested in them, with honor to themselves and advantage to the public, by the formation of a new administration, appointed under circumstances which may tend to conciliate the minds of his faithful commons, and give energy and stability to his majesty's councils: That as his majesty's faithful commons, upon the maturest deliberations, cannot but consider the continuance of the present ministers as an unsurmountable obstacle to his majesty's gracious purpose, to comply with their wishes in the formation of such an admi-

nistration as his majesty, in concurrence with the unanimous resolutions of this house, seems to think requisite in the present exigencies of the country, they feel themselves bound to remain firm in the wish expressed to his majesty, in their late humble address, and do therefore find themselves obliged again to beseech his majesty, that he would be graciously pleased to lay the foundation of a strong and stable government, by the previous removal of his present ministers."

In the course of the debate which followed, Mr. Pitt controverted two positions of Mr. Fox, namely, That the house of commons had a power of giving a negative, in the first instance, to the king's appointment of ministers; and that his majesty ought not, in any case, to dismiss ministers who had the confidence of that house. He said, he never would be afraid to avow himself the friend and advocate of the just and constitutional prerogatives of the crown; that he would not consent to wrest the sceptre out of the hand of the king, and place it in the hand of that house; and that he should not think it wise, to take away the substance of the royal prerogative, and leave merely the name, and the shadow. He challenged Mr. Fox to produce any law or authority, in support of the doctrines he had laid down; and, till that was done, he must consider them as gratuitous, unfounded assertions. In answer to a charge, which had been urged against him, by general Conway, of wishing to derogate from the power and influence of the house of commons, he asked, "Had he, in any part of his conduct, manifested any peculiar predilection in favor of the monarchical part of the government, or of the undue influence of the crown? Had he, since he had the honor of a seat in that house, wished

to destroy, or to encroach on, the privileges of parliament? The constitution, and the rights of the house of commons, he had always been taught to venerate. He would therefore appeal to the candor of the house, as well as to its recollection of his expressions on that subject, whether he had not, on all occasions, and under every description of circumstances, maintained its privileges and its dignity. His own opinions, his partialities, and his views, favored those ideas; and he must have been deluded indeed, to have acted in opposition to them. But while he expressed his warmest sentiments for the honor and dignity of the house of commons, he felt himself under an obligation, at the same time, to vindicate the doctrines of the honorable baronet (sir William Dolben,) behind him, so far as they respected the rights of the other branches of the legislature, so far as they regarded the legal prerogatives of the sovereign. These, the constitution had defined, with as much accuracy as it had done those of the house of commons; and it was, surely, the duty of ministers, and of members of that house, equally to support the rights of both. No man was more zealous or more unreserved in admitting and asserting the right of the house to advise the sovereign in the exercise of his prerogatives, than he was. This was a sentiment, which he had always avowed; but, that a declaration of the disapprobation of the house, of his majesty's ministers, should, ipso facto, in every instance, bind and compel the sovereign to dismiss his ministers, or compel them to resign, was a point, which he never had admitted, and never would allow. Such disapprobation unquestionably placed ministers in an awkward and unpleasant situation; but that it should force them to retire, he would

maintain, was an unconstitutional doctrine, hostile to the prerogative of the crown, and to that balance of power, on which the excellency of the British government depended. That was a point, therefore, which he was always ready to maintain, and from supporting which, he hoped, he should never be diverted by any false theories, or vague declamations, respecting the dignity of that house."

Mr. Pitt afterwards noticed an assertion of Mr. Wilberforce, that a faction existed in the house of commons, dangerous to the constitution. "How far," he said, "that might be true, how far the conduct of the house of commons, during its late procedure, justified that assertion, and how far the address under consideration, confirmed its truth, ought to be weighed, and ought to produce corresponding effects on the minds and votes of the members of the house. In deliberating, however, on that point, he would caution gentlemen, not to be overawed by unfounded alarms of an encroaching prerogative, or to be influenced by the ring and sound of dignity, so incessantly poured into the ears of the house, on the present and past occasions. But, though he was the opponent of all capricious decision on the appointment of ministers, he was as unfriendly to their continuance in office, when disapproved of by the house of commons on proper grounds, as he should be, if disapproved of by either of the other branches of the legislature. On that account, he called upon the house to specify charges against administration, to prove those charges, and not unjustly condemn men, who had in no instance whatever been found guilty, and had, in fact, by an unaccountable obstinacy and untowardness of circumstances, been deprived of an opportunity

CHAP. IV. 1784.

of displaying their prudence and their zeal in the service of the public. When accusations should be proved, when charges should be substantiated, it would then be proper for ministers to resign; and in such a case, if he should afterwards continue in office, he would suffer himself to be stigmatized as the illegal champion of prerogative, and the unconstitutional supporter of the usurpations of the crown. But, till that period arrived, he should consider it his duty to adhere to the principles of the constitution, as delivered to us by our ancestors, to defend them against innovation and encroachment, and to maintain them with firmness." A division took place, and the motion was carried, by a majority of 12; the numbers being 201, and 189. An address, founded upon this resolution, was then agreed to, and ordered to be presented to his majesty, by the whole house.

The address was presented on the 4th; to which his majesty returned the following answer:

"I have already expressed to you, how sensible I am of the advantages to be derived from such an administration as was pointed out in your unanimous resolution. And I assured you, that I was desirous of taking every step most conducive to such an object.—I remain in the same sentiments, but I continue equally convinced, that it is an object not likely to be obtained by the dismission of my present ministers.

"I must repeat, that no charge, or complaint, or any specific objection, is yet made against any of them; if there were any such ground for their removal at present, it ought to be equally a reason for not admitting them as a part of that extended and

united administration, which you state to be requisite.—I did not consider the failure of my recent endeavors, as a final bar to the accomplishment of the purpose which I had in view, if it could have been obtained on those principles of fairness and equality, without which, it can neither be honorable to those who are concerned, nor lay the foundation of such a strong and stable government, as may be of lasting advantage to the country.—But I know of no farther steps which I can take, that are likely to remove the difficulties which obstruct that desirable end. I have never called in question the right of my faithful commons, to offer me their advice upon every proper occasion, touching the exercise of any branch of my prerogative. I shall be ready at all times to receive it, and give it the most attentive consideration. They will ever find me disposed to shew every regard to the true principles of the constitution, and to take such measures, as may best conduce to the satisfaction and prosperity of my kingdom."

When the speaker, on his return to the house, had read the king's answer, Mr. Fox immediately moved, that it should be taken into consideration on the following Monday, which was unanimously agreed to. Another motion was then made, by Mr. Welbore Ellis, that the house should adjourn to Monday, upon the ground, "that it was not customary or proper, that any business should be brought forward, until questions, which immediately concerned the dignity of the house, were disposed of." Mr. Fox seconded the motion, saying, "that he did it not with any view to delay public business, or to withhold any supply; and he intended that his conduct should

prove the sincerity of his professions. But surely, when a matter of such moment, as the king's answer, was to be discussed, and to be followed up with some measure which ought to be final, twice twenty-four hours could not be considered too long for deliberation."

Mr. Pitt objected to this motion, observing, "that Mr. Fox wished not to be thought desirous of stopping public business; but when he proposed delay from day to day, it was very natural for people to doubt what were his real intentions. He reminded the house, that the present mutiny bill would expire very soon, and that the new mutiny bill stood for to-morrow; and he hoped that the house would not think it expedient to put off the consideration of that bill any longer. He, therefore, proposed, that as the house was then very thin, they should adjourn till to-morrow, when it might be determined, whether all business should be postponed till Monday." Mr. Fox said, that it was then only the 4th of March; and that if the new mutiny bill went into a committee on Tuesday the 9th, it might pass the house of lords before the 25th, on which day the present mutiny bill would expire, "for he believed, that the new mutiny bill differed in very few particulars from former mutiny bills: it might indeed be necessary to make the new one shorter in its duration; and he hoped, that this one privilege was still left to the commons, that the mutiny bill, providing quarters for the army, and consequently imposing burdens on their constituents, could not be altered by the lords, after it should be sent up to them by the commons." Mr. Fox at last consented, that the house should meet to-morrow, "provided it was understood, that the first question

to be discussed should be, whether the house should adjourn to Monday, or proceed then to business." This being agreed to by Mr. Pitt, the house adjourned.

Though Mr. Fox had been compelled to abandon the idea of stopping the supplies, from the evident reluctance of some of his supporters to go to that extreme length, yet his failure in that attempt did not discourage him from endeavoring to sound their sentiments respecting a short mutiny bill; well knowing that a mutiny bill passed from month to month, would make a dissolution of parliament impossible. Accordingly he took the first opportunity in his power, as we have just seen, of mentioning the subject, as it were incidentally; and, on the following day, when he moved an adjournment, as soon as the house met, for the purpose of preventing the mutiny bill going into a committee till Tuesday, he more openly avowed his opinion, that, under present circumstances, the bill ought not to extend to the usual term of a year. In support of his motion, he said, that he did not think it proper, that so important a bill, as that for punishing mutiny and desertion in the army, should be debated until the house should have taken some step to fill up and consummate the measures which had been lately adopted. He admitted, "that a mutiny bill was unquestionably necessary, and that the house could not avoid passing it; but though a mutiny bill must of necessity pass, it by no means followed, that it must be, in point of duration, equal to all those mutiny bills which had preceded: a bill for a month, or six weeks, would keep the army together, without calling upon the house to surrender a right, so very necessary, at that moment, for the preservation of its privileges."

Mr. Pitt, fully aware of Mr. Fox's design, objected to the motion, and again complained of the practice of putting off public business. He deprecated the idea of a short mutiny bill; and observed, that if a mutiny bill for a month, or six weeks, only, should be sent up to the lords, it would not appear very surprising to him, if the lords should alter it so far, as to bring it back to the standard of former mutiny bills, and make it co-extensive with the duration of the army, the pay of which had been voted for the usual term of a year. If then such an alteration should be made by the lords, and the bill so altered should be returned to the commons, what would be the consequence, if the latter, adhering to their order and the practice of their proceedings, should reject such a bill*? If such an event were to take place, long before the expiration of the present mutiny bill, the consequences might not be dangerous; but when, as at present, there was scarcely a single day to spare, even supposing the bill to be sent up to the lords in its customary form, and passed by them without any opposition, or delay—but he would not for a moment suppose it possible for the house to pass a short mutiny bill; he did not believe they would; nay, he would almost venture to go so far as to say, they would not. He was for going into the bill that day, because there was not a moment to be lost. If the adjournment, moved by the right honorable member, should take place, he was certain, that the committee on the mutiny

* Mr. Pitt meant, on account of its being a money bill, as it directed the quartering of soldiers, which is a burden upon the people. All money bills must originate in the house of commons; and if altered by the house of lords, they are always, when returned, rejected by the house of commons.

bill could not possibly sit till Tuesday; and as the consideration of the accompts from the India house stood for that day, it might, perhaps, not come on till Wednesday. Surely the house did not wish to run the bill to a day, and to risque the mischief which must necessarily follow, if it should, by any misfortune, happen to miscarry. In order, therefore, to avert that mischief, as far as in him lay, he would oppose the motion for adjournment, that the mutiny bill might be immediately committed. This reasoning did not prevent the motion being carried; but the majority was only nine, the numbers being 171 and 162; and the manner in which the idea of a short mutiny bill was received on this and the preceding day, convinced Mr. Fox, that the house would not consent to such a measure, and all intention of proposing it was abandoned.

Mr. Fox having found the resolutions of the house of commons, and the addresses to the throne, to be equally ineffectual, and not venturing to hazard any direct motion, for stopping the supplies, or shortening the mutiny bill, became sensible, that no farther means remained of carrying on the contest; more especially, as the late divisions had shewn that the number of his supporters was considerably diminished. Under these circumstances he had no alternative but to relinquish all active opposition, and to wait for any opportunity of renewing the attack, which the course of events might afford. It appeared, however, to him, desirable to place upon the journals of the house, and also to lodge with his majesty, a summary of the principles he had maintained, and a statement of the objects he had pursued; and therefore, on the 8th of March, after a speech, in which he accused Mr. Pitt of insulting and

CHAP. IV. 1784.

unconstitutional conduct, declared that an union of parties was now impossible, and lamented the disgrace and ruin brought upon the country by the issue of this struggle, he moved*, as his last measure, " that an humble representation be presented to his majesty, most humbly to testify the surprise and affliction of this house, on receiving the answer which his majesty's ministers have advised to the dutiful and reasonable address of this house, concerning one of the most important acts of his majesty's government.—To express our concern, that when his majesty's paternal goodness has graciously inclined his majesty to be sensible of the advantage to be derived from such an administration as was pointed out in our resolution, his majesty should still be induced to prefer the opinions of individuals, to the repeated advice of the representatives of the people in parliament assembled, with respect to the means of obtaining so desirable an end.—To represent to his majesty, that a preference of this nature is as injurious to the true interests of the crown, as it is wholly repugnant to the spirit of our free constitution; that systems founded on such a preference are not, in truth, entirely new in this country; that they have been the characteristic features of those unfortunate reigns, the maxims of which are now justly and universally exploded; while his majesty, and his royal progenitors, have been fixed in the hearts of their people, and have commanded the respect and admiration of all

* It being generally understood, that Mr. Fox intended, on this day, to make his last motion on the present state of political affairs, such anxious curiosity was excited, that the gallery of the house of commons was full by eleven o'clock, five or six hours before the debate was expected to begin.

the nations of the earth, by a constant and uniform attention to the advice of their commons, however adverse such advice may have been to the opinions of the executive servants of the crown.—To assure his majesty, that we neither have disputed, nor mean, in any instance, to dispute, much less to deny, his majesty's undoubted prerogative of appointing to the executive offices of state, such persons as to his majesty's wisdom shall seem meet: but, at the same time, that we must, with all humility, again submit to his majesty's royal wisdom, that no administration, however legally appointed, can serve his majesty, and the public, with effect, which does not enjoy the confidence of this house.—That in his majesty's present administration we cannot confide; the circumstances under which it was constituted, and the grounds upon which it continues, have created just suspicions in the breasts of his faithful commons; that principles are adopted, and views entertained, unfriendly to the privilege of this house, and to the freedom of our excellent constitution; that we have made no charge against any of them, because it is their removal, and not their punishment, which we have desired; and that we humbly conceive, we are warranted, by the antient usage of this house, to desire such removal without making any charge whatever; that confidence may be prudently withheld, where no criminal process can be properly instituted: that although we have made no criminal charge against any individual of his majesty's ministers, yet, with all humility, we do conceive, that we have stated to his majesty, very distinct objections, and very forcible reasons, against their continuance.—That with regard to the propriety of admitting either the present

CHAP. IV. 1784.

ministers, or any other persons, as a part of that extended and united administration, which his majesty, in concurrence with the sentiments of this house, considers as requisite, it is a point upon which we are too well acquainted with the bounds of our duty, to presume to offer any advice to his majesty; well knowing it to be the undoubted prerogative of his majesty to appoint his ministers, without any previous advice from either house of parliament; and our duty humbly to offer to his majesty our advice, when such appointments shall appear to us to be prejudicial to the public service.—To acknowledge, with gratitude, his majesty's goodness in not considering the failure of his recent endeavors as a final bar to the accomplishment of the gracious purpose which his majesty has in view; and to express the great concern and mortification, with which we find ourselves obliged to declare, that the consolation which we should naturally have derived from his majesty's most gracious disposition, is considerably abated by understanding, that his majesty's advisers have not thought fit to suggest to his majesty, any farther steps to remove the difficulties which obstruct so desirable an end.—To recall to his majesty's recollection, that his faithful commons have already submitted to his majesty, most humbly, but most distinctly, their opinion upon this subject; that they can have no interests but those of his majesty, and of their constituents; whereas it is needless to suggest to his majesty's wisdom and discernment, that individual advisers may be actuated by very different motives.—To express our most unfeigned gratitude for his majesty's royal assurances, that he does not call in question the right of this house, to offer their

advice to his majesty on every proper occasion, touching the exercise of any branch of his royal prerogative; and of his majesty's readiness, at all times, to receive such advice, and to give it the most attentive consideration.—To declare that we recognize in these gracious expressions, those excellent and constitutional sentiments, which we have ever been accustomed to hear from the throne, since the glorious era of the revolution, and which have peculiarly characterized his majesty, and the princes of his illustrious house; but, to lament that these most gracious expressions, while they inspire us with additional affection and gratitude towards his majesty's royal person, do not a little contribute to increase our suspicions of those men who have advised his majesty, in direct contradiction to these assurances, to neglect the advice of his commons, and to retain in his service an administration, whose continuance in office we have so repeatedly and so distinctly condemned.—To represent to his majesty, that it has antiently been the practice of this house to withhold supplies until grievances were redressed; and that if we were to follow this course in the present conjuncture, we should be warranted in our proceeding, as well by the most approved precedents, as by the spirit of the constitution itself; but if, in consideration of the very peculiar exigencies of the times, we should be induced to wave for the present the exercise, in this instance, of our undoubted legal and constitutional mode of obtaining redress, that we humbly implore his majesty not to impute our forbearance to any want of sincerity in our complaints, or distrust in the justice of our cause.—That we know, and are

CHAP. IV. 1784.

sure, that the prosperity of his majesty's dominions in former times, has been, under Divine Providence, owing to the harmony which has for near a century prevailed uninterruptedly between the crown and this house.—That we are convinced, that there is no way to extricate this country from its present difficulties, but by pursuing the same system, to which we have been indebted at various periods of our history, for our successes abroad, and which is at all times so necessary for our tranquillity at home.—That we feel the continuance of the present administration to be an innovation upon that happy system.—That we cannot but expect, from their existence under the displeasure of this house, every misfortune naturally incident to a weak and distracted government; that if we had concealed from his majesty, our honest sentiments upon this important crisis, we should have been in some degree responsible for the mischiefs which are but too certain to ensue.—That we have done our duty to his majesty and our constituents, in pointing out the evil, and in humbly imploring redress: that the blame and responsibility must now be wholly upon those who have presumed to advise his majesty to act in contradiction to the uniform maxims which have hitherto governed the conduct of his majesty, as well as every other prince of his illustrious house; upon those who have disregarded the opinions, and neglected the admonitions of the representatives of his people, and who have thereby attempted to set up a new system of executive administration, which, wanting the confidence of this house, and acting in defiance to our resolutions, must prove at once inadequate, by its inefficiency, to the

necessary objects of government, and dangerous by its example, to the liberties of the people*."

This motion, after a debate of considerable length, was carried by a majority of only one, the numbers being 191 and 190; and it was then ordered, without a division, that the representation should be presented to his majesty, by such members as were privy counsellors.

Mr. Pitt sent to his majesty, at Windsor, an account of what had passed this day in the house of commons, and received the following answer: "Mr. Pitt's letter is, undoubtedly, the most satisfactory I have received for many months. An avowal on the outset, that the proposition held forth is not intended to go farther lengths than a kind of manifesto; and then carrying it by a majority of only one, and the day concluded with an avowal, that all negotiation is at an end, gives me every reason to hope, that by a firm and proper conduct, this faction will, by degrees, be deserted by many, and at length be forgot. I shall ever with pleasure consider, that by the prudence, as well as rectitude, of one person, in the house of commons, this great change has been effected; and that he will ever be able to reflect with satisfaction, that in having supported me, he has saved the constitution, the most perfect of human formation."

On the following day the house went into a committee upon the mutiny bill; and when the chairman came to the clause which related to the duration of the bill, the secretary at war moved, that the blank should be filled up with the words,

* Whatever difference of opinion there may be upon the sentiments and principles contained in this representation, every one must, I think, admire it as a composition.

CHAP. IV. 1784.

" from the 25th day of March 1784, to the 25th day of March, 1785," in order that the bill should be in force for the usual period of one year. Sir Matthew White Ridley, who had constantly voted with the majorities against Mr. Pitt, immediately said, " that he and those with whom he had acted, would that day prove, how false the reports were, that they intended to stop the supplies, throw out the mutiny bill, and plunge the nation into anarchy and confusion." He asserted the purity of his motives, in the part which he had lately taken; he was now compelled to confess, he said, that the house was defeated, and to acknowledge that the minister had triumphed by means of the people, who had decidedly expressed their sentiments in his favor; and therefore he was resolved to withdraw himself from his attendance in a house, which had been sacrificed by its constituents to the prerogative of the crown.

Mr. Powys, who in the beginning of the contest, had voted with Mr. Pitt, but in the course of it had taken a different line, followed sir Matthew White Ridley, and " acknowledged with regret, that, notwithstanding the manly stand made by the majority, of which he had the honor to be one, Mr. Pitt had conquered the house of commons, and that he held his situation in defiance of their addresses: he gave him credit for his firmness; he had carried the point he had undertaken. The house was, indeed, conquered; for, though a vote of the commons could once bestow a crown*, it could not now procure the dismission of a minister. As he had been often charged with inconsistency, he would this day give some force to that

* Mr. Powys alluded to the revolution, but seemed to forget, that then the house of commons and the people were of the same opinion.

charge, by voting for a long mutiny bill, and thereby putting it in the power of ministers to dissolve parliament; a measure, which, for some time past, he had been endeavoring to prevent. He was willing to let ministers run their mad career; he was convinced, that a dissolution would be ruinous; but the commons were conquered, and it would be in vain for him to oppose a triumphant minister, full of confidence in the troops that surrounded him. He had once, he said, given a description of the forces that opposed the present administration; he would now, with the leave of the house, describe those that were led by the right honorable gentleman on the treasury bench. The first might be called his body guard, composed of light young troops, who shot their little arrows with amazing dexterity against those who refused to swear allegiance to their chief. The second might be called the corps of royal volunteers, staunch champions for prerogative, ever ready to fall with determined valor upon those who should dare to oppose privilege to prerogative. The third was a legion composed of deserters, attached to their leader by no other principle than that of interest, and who, after having deserted *to* him from that principle, would desert *from* him upon the same grounds, when they saw their interest would suffer, if they should stand by him. Such were the component parts of the army, which had triumphed over the house of commons, and conquered the constitution." He then gave an account of the unsuccessful attempts made to effect an union of parties, in which he had taken an active share.

Mr. Pitt began his reply to this speech, by observing, that, "as the mutiny bill was the subject under consideration, he

CHAP. IV. 1784.

was ready to admit, that the military picture, which Mr. Powys had been pleased to draw, was peculiarly proper for exhibition on that day. The honorable gentleman, he said, had amused himself and the house, by describing the different corps that supported administration. He was certainly much in the right to display his talent at description, for which he was so well qualified; for, having once described the opposite army, while he opposed it, it was now fit that he should describe that which he at present opposed, but which he formerly fought with. He (Mr. Powys) was resolved to shew how able he could appear on either side of the question; and with what powers of eloquence, he could, without any visible cause, oppose an administration, which he had once supported. The first corps, the house was told, was composed of light archers, who shot their little arrows with great dexterity: probably the honorable gentleman's armor had not been so strong as to be proof against the darts of these archers; for these little arrows, which he affected so much to despise, seemed to have galled him not a little. As to the prerogative volunteers, who formed the second band, he was proud of their support, because neither they nor he could be fond of the prerogative without being fond of the constitution, for the prerogative was part of it: nor could he, for the same reason, be an enemy to the house of commons, which was a part of the constitution; and, consequently, to him an object of veneration. He could not conceive why the honorable gentleman should call the third band deserters, merely because they did not think proper to go the lengths to which others were hurrying the house. The honorable gentleman had an opportunity of knowing the secrets

of the enemy; for, having served in both armies, and having undertaken the task of negotiating, he was able to do his friends signal service, by the information he might collect as a spy, while he enjoyed the privileges and immunities of an ambassador. The honorable gentleman had stated what he called the debtor and creditor side of the account in the negotiation for an union. It might, perhaps, suit his ideas to state the business as a matter of barter; but as the only object he (Mr. Pitt) had in the transaction, was the public good, he considered not what men would give or gain, but what would promote the prosperity of the country."

Mr. Powys appeared much annoyed by the sarcastic severity of this speech, and, rising with great warmth, desired to know, whether by applying the word spy to him, Mr. Pitt meant to charge him with any dishonorable conduct. Mr. Pitt assured him, that he did not; his only intention being to convey the idea, that as the honorable gentleman had served in both armies, he knew the secrets of both, as well as any spy could. The words proposed by the secretary at war, were adopted without a division; and no observation was made on the remaining parts of the bill.

It might have been expected, that in this momentous struggle the people would have sided with Mr. Fox, who was supported by a majority of their representatives, and who professed to be contending for the power and influence of that branch of the legislature, which was chosen by the people themselves. But, in this instance, the natural jealousy in the public mind, respecting the consequence of the house of commons, gave

CHAP. IV. 1784.

way to more powerful considerations. Lord North and Mr. Fox had, by their coalition, brought upon themselves no small degree of public odium; and the India bill, the first fruits of that coalition, was, as soon as it was understood, universally condemned. Every unprejudiced person now saw, that, by the former, political sentiment and private feeling were sacrificed to the gratification of ambition; and that, by the latter, the fundamental principles of the constitution were violated, and the most valuable rights of Englishmen threatened with destruction. The violence and animosity with which Mr. Fox and his partizans acted, in the house of commons, after they were dismissed from office, and their reiterated attempts to compel their sovereign to reinstate them in power, in contradiction to his acknowledged prerogative, added greatly to their unpopularity, and afforded Mr. Pitt an opportunity of displaying qualities which gradually raised him to the highest pitch of estimation and confidence with all ranks and descriptions of persons. Never was there a period when the national opinion was more strongly or more generally expressed. Almost every county, city, and considerable corporation in the kingdom, not under the immediate influence of the adverse interest, presented addresses to the throne, in which they returned their warmest thanks to his majesty for dismissing his late ministers from his service, and declared their firm resolution to support him in the defence of the lawful rights of his crown. Mr. Pitt also received numerous addresses*, containing the

* In looking over Mr. Pitt's papers, I have found 36 of these addresses, and there were many others which were not preserved.

most decided approbation of his conduct, and urging him to persevere in maintaining the true principles of the British constitution.

Thus had Mr. Pitt the satisfaction of seeing his own predictions, relative to Mr. Fox's India bill, its author, and its supporters, completely fulfilled; and, being convinced that the time was now arrived, when he might appeal to the people with the greatest probability of a favorable result, he determined to advise the dissolution of parliament, as soon as the state of public business would permit.

The house continued to meet every day, and the usual motions relative to the supplies, were suffered to pass without any impediment or interruption. Nor was any farther remark made upon the mutiny bill, in its remaining stages. Mr. Fox, and his party, perhaps hoped, that by acquiescing in the measures of government, they might induce Mr. Pitt not to dissolve parliament; or, that the country might consider a dissolution, if it took place after all opposition was withdrawn, as a needless and improper exercise of the prerogative. But Mr. Pitt was not to be diverted from his purpose: he was aware, that though his adversaries now deemed it expedient to be perfectly passive, they might, upon some future occasion, if the parliament continued, come forward with considerable force; and it was obvious to all, that the present disposition of the public mind afforded him too favorable an opportunity of strengthening his administration, to be omitted with any degree of prudence.

On the 12th, Mr. Sawbridge moved for the appointment of a committee, to inquire into the present state of the representa-

tion; and his motion was negatived by 141 to 93. Mr. Pitt voted in the minority.

Nothing afterwards occurred in the house of commons, deserving of notice till the 22d, when, upon the secretary of war's moving the order of the day, for going into a committee on the estimates of the extraordinaries of the army, sir Grey Cooper mentioned the report and general expectation, that parliament would soon be dissolved. He said, that such a measure would be daring and unwarrantable, under present circumstances; that though the army had been voted, it could not be legally paid, until an appropriation act should have passed; and that if ministers did venture to dissolve parliament, and to pay the army, without being authorized so to do, by an act of the legislature, it would be an infraction of the bill of rights, and a violation of the constitution, for which they must have a bill of indemnity. Mr. Harrison said, that there was now no pretence for a dissolution, as Mr. Fox and his friends had desisted from opposing the measures of administration. Mr. Hussey desired to know, whether parliament was to be dissolved this week. Mr. Pitt took no notice of these observations and questions, and the supply was voted.

On the following day, when the question was put for bringing up the report of the committee of supply, Mr. Eden, lord North, and general Conway, successively mentioned the expected dissolution of parliament, and stated a variety of objections to it, of a public nature, relying principally on the want of an appropriation act. But no notice being taken of these observations, lord North rose again, and asked, if parliament should be dissolved, upon what authority ministers

would issue money for the subsistence of the army, in the month of May? Mr. Pitt still remained silent; and it being found impossible to obtain any answer from him, the report was suffered to be brought up. He had in fact previously and fully considered all the difficulties and objections urged against a dissolution, on this and the preceding day, and was satisfied that there was no difficulty which might not be obviated, nor any objection of sufficient weight to prevent a measure, in other respects so highly desirable; but he did not think it necessary to enter into any explanation at present. He was determined to take upon himself the responsibility, both of the dissolution itself, and of issuing money for the payment of the army, and for the discharge of every other public service; and he was prepared to justify the whole of his conduct to the new parliament, if it should be made the subject of inquiry, being himself convinced that a bill of indemnity would not be necessary.

On the 24th, the king went to the house of lords; and after giving the royal assent to several bills, he delivered the following speech from the throne:

"My lords, and gentlemen,

"On a full consideration of the present situation of affairs, and of the extraordinary circumstances which have produced it, I am induced to put an end to this session of parliament. I feel it a duty, which I owe to the constitution, and to the country, in such a situation, to recur as speedily as possible, to the sense of my people, by calling a new parliament.

I trust that this measure will tend to obviate the mischiefs arising from the unhappy divisions and distractions which have lately subsisted: and that the various important objects, which will require consideration, may be afterwards proceeded upon with less interruption, and with happier effect. I can have no other object, but to preserve the true principles of our free and happy constitution, and to employ the powers intrusted to me by law, for the only end for which they were given, the good of my people."

The dissolution accordingly took place the next day, the 25th of March, and the new parliament was summoned to meet on the 18th of May.

THUS ended a contest, which, at the same time that it decided the great constitutional point at issue, may justly be considered as the crisis of Mr. Pitt's political life. It was his main struggle with Mr. Fox, for superiority. It was to determine, which of the two should be the minister of the country. This contest was so extraordinary in its origin and nature, so highly interesting from the importance of the questions discussed, and the result which it produced, and afforded so much insight into the character of Mr. Pitt, that I shall add a few observations to the circumstantial detail already given, although it will lead me to speak upon subjects of great delicacy, and perhaps in some instances to repeat what has been already said.

The rejection of Mr. Fox's India bill by the house of lords, which was attributed to the intimation of his majesty's sentiments, through lord Temple, laid the foundation of this

memorable contest. It may be true, that, according to the theory of our constitution, the different branches of the legislature ought not to interfere with each other; and, as every law must have the consent of all the three branches, this interference, where the rejection of a legislative measure is concerned, is as unnecessary, as, strictly speaking; it is unconstitutional. No one, however, will deny, that an interference of this kind, between individual members of the two houses of parliament, has, in reality, always existed, a mutual influence, or at least an influence of members of the house of lords over members of the house of commons, being impossible to be prevented; and it is also certain, that the wishes of the king, whenever they have been made known, have always influenced the votes of a certain number of peers, particularly those employed about his person, which is equally unavoidable. Practice therefore is, and must be, in this instance, in direct opposition to the speculative principles of our form of government. The interposition in question, which was so loudly complained of, with a view to catch popular prejudice, cannot surely be thought unreasonable, when the long disuse of the royal prerogative, in withholding assent to acts which have passed the other two branches of the legislature, and the objections there may be to its revival, are fairly considered. If the king be neither to exercise his negative, nor to express his opinion upon any measure depending in parliament, his concurrence in making laws is a mere form, and he becomes a cypher in the government of the country; or, in the emphatic words of Mr. Fox, he is "a captive on his throne, and the first

CHAP. IV. 1784.

slave in his own dominions*." Even if a measure be rejected by either house of parliament through the influence of the king, who sees reason to disapprove it, it can scarcely be said, that the spirit of the constitution is violated, since every act of the legislature is supposed to have his majesty's free consent and real approbation. Peers have ever been considered as hereditary counsellors to the king, and it is universally admitted, that, both collectively and individually, they have a constitutional right to give advice to their sovereign; but where can be the wisdom or advantage of such a privilege, if his majesty has not the means of following the advice which he may receive? And what other means can he have, especially where the advice relates to measures proposed by his ministers, and requiring the sanction of the legislature, than the public exercise of his negative, or the private declaration of his sentiments?

The sudden removal of Mr. Fox and his colleagues from office, gave rise, as we have seen, to a variety of imputations concerning secret advisers of the king, as if there were a set of men, in no responsible situations, to whose advice his majesty was accustomed to listen, in matters of state, and in conformity to which the ostensible ministers were expected to act. The idea was first mentioned in an early part of the late reign, when changes in administration were frequent; and seems to have originated with those, who were conscious of not enjoying the royal favor, from a desire of exciting a popular cry against their more fortunate rivals. It obtained a certain degree of credit, and was resorted to, in some cases, with con-

* Parliamentary Register, vol. 12, p. 439.

siderable effect. There is, however, no reason to think, that there were in reality any such persons. Lord North, during this contest, acknowledged, that, while in his majesty's service, he never experienced any private control or interference in the measures of government; and Mr. Pitt, not only during this contest, but also towards the end of his life, made the same declaration. And as the administrations of lord North and Mr. Pitt, extended over a period of more than thirty years, it is incredible, that any influence of the nature alluded to, had it existed, should have escaped their notice. Short possessors of power were the persons, who complained of secret influence; and they could not attribute their dismissal from office, to a cause less wounding to their pride. A king is not to be supposed destitute of human affections, incapable of forming opinions, or insensible to those motives, which govern the rest of mankind in their intercourse with the world, or in the management of their respective concerns. He may think well or ill of those, whose conduct he has had an opportunity of witnessing or knowing: he may believe one man better qualified to promote the welfare and happiness of his people, and to raise the honor and glory of his kingdom, than another: he may have noticed in an individual, highly gifted perhaps with natural talents, the avowal of such public principles, united with such licentiousness of private character, that he could not, with safety to the constitution, entrust him with any considerable share of political power; and he may possibly have remarked in the same individual, such a readiness on all occasions to speak of his sovereign with marked disrespect and personal asperity, that he could not, feeling as a man, with

CHAP. IV. 1784.

comfort to himself, admit him to his confidence: he may be convinced, that, under existing circumstances, a particular system of foreign politics ought to be pursued, that some material alteration ought to be introduced in the management of his distant dominions, or, that certain regulations respecting the internal government of the country, ought to be adopted.—In any of these cases, or in promoting any of these objects, he may be following his own deliberate and dispassionate judgment, and acting from the purest motives, and with the best intentions, in the appointment or dismissal of ministers, or in the exercise of any other acknowledged prerogative, while he is accused of yielding to unconstitutional influence, private intrigue, or groundless prejudice. Besides, if secret advisers did exist in the late reign, who were they? Persons of their consequence could not long have remained unknown. There must also have been a succession of them, in the course of fifty years. The favorites of princes are soon detected by the jealous eye of rival candidates, and are drawn into notice by riches, or honors, or some public mark of royal favor. Nothing of this kind occurred in the long reign of his late majesty. We may, therefore, consider secret influence as a "bugbear," as "the catchword of a party, to amuse the credulous vulgar, and to raise discontent against the sovereign and certain individuals," and "as disbelieved even by those who were most clamorous upon the subject*."

* Parliamentary Register, pages 514, 531, &c. • The late lord Chatham, not long before his death, having imputed to the secret influence of lord Bute, those counsels which "had brought the king and kingdom to ruin," lord Mountstuart, in the published letter already noticed, and dated October 23, 1778, speaking of

It was unequivocally admitted, in the course of this contest, that the house of commons had a right to advise the king respecting the exercise of any of his royal prerogatives; but it was contended, on the other hand, that his majesty, on his part, had a right to act or not to act, in conformity to that advice. The word advice implies a right in the party advised, to accept or reject the advice. If there be not that right, instead of advice, it becomes command. In every instance of advice, coming from a quarter authorized to offer it, the person, to whom it is offered, is indeed bound to weigh and consider it impartially and dispassionately; but he is supposed competent, and at full liberty, after such deliberation, to judge and decide, whether it ought to be followed or not. In most cases it may be desirable, that the king should follow the advice which he receives from the house of commons; but to say, that in no possible case the king ought to act contrary to the advice of the house of commons, is to place the king under the absolute control and direction of that house, to require him implicitly to do whatever it shall dictate, to forbid the free exercise of the functions vested in him by law, to annihilate all substantial authority in one branch of the legislature, and to pass over a second, as totally unworthy of any regard or consideration, as it was voted to be in the republican days

his father, lord Bute, writes thus:—"He does, therefore, authorize me to say, that he declares, upon his solemn word of honor, he has not had the honor of waiting on his majesty, but at his levee or drawing room; nor has he presumed to offer any advice or opinion concerning the disposition of offices, or the conduct of measures, either directly or indirectly, by himself or any other, from the time when the late duke of Cumberland was consulted in the arrangement of a ministry in 1765, to the present hour."

of the seventeenth century. If the king were under an obligation to take such ministers, as the house of commons, directly or indirectly, should choose to recommend, the appointment of ministers would virtually be in the house of commons; and the democratic part of our government would gain an ascendancy, which was never intended by its framers, or recognized at any period of our history, as a genuine principle of the British constitution. It seems, therefore, clear, that the king had an undoubted legal right to reject the advice given him by the house of commons, in this contest respecting the dismissal of his ministers; and the only remaining question is, whether circumstances were such as to justify his majesty in the rejection of that advice?

Upon this point it is first to be remarked, that Mr. Pitt had been so recently appointed to his office, that it was literally impossible for him to have been guilty of any misconduct as minister; nor was any thing of that kind imputed to him by the house of commons, in their resolutions, or addresses to the king. His majesty noticed this circumstance, in one of his answers; and therefore it being obvious, that the objection to Mr. Pitt proceeded solely from the prevalence of party spirit, his majesty saw no sufficient ground for the immediate reversal of his own confessedly legal and constitutional act. Had the king dismissed his ministers, upon the first appearance of a majority against them, he must again have admitted into his counsels, lord North and Mr. Fox, whom he had lately removed from his service, in consequence of their having brought forward a bill for the government of India, which, if it had passed into a law, would have created a power unknown to the

constitution, and would materially have interfered with the acknowledged rights of the sovereign. Subsequently to the failure of that bill, Mr. Fox had repeatedly and eagerly defended its principle, and had announced his intention, and indeed obtained formal leave, to introduce another bill, similar to it in all its fundamental and essential provisions. The king, therefore, felt it to be a duty, which he owed to his own station, and to the country, not to allow the return of Mr. Fox and his friends, to the exclusive enjoyment of power, which must have been followed by the passing of this unconstitutional and dangerous measure. It clearly appears indeed, from the king's letters to Mr. Pitt, that throughout this struggle, his majesty considered himself as defending his own just rights, and the vital principles of the constitution, against what he himself called "a desperate and unprincipled faction*,"—"an opposition as unprincipled and mischievous as ever embroiled the affairs of any country." He did, however, afterwards so far comply with the wishes of the house of commons, as to declare his readiness to admit the late ministers into office jointly with Mr. Pitt; but he refused, as a preliminary step, to dismiss Mr. Pitt and his colleagues, not thinking it right to leave the country without an administration, and justly observing, that if there were any real ground for their removal, it should equally operate as a reason for not admitting them again into office. His majesty could not but be convinced, that if the late ministers

* In a letter, dated February the 18th, his majesty said to Mr. Pitt, "Mr. Pitt may depend upon my being heartily ready to adopt vigorous measures, as I think the struggle is really no less than my being called upon to stand forth in defence of the constitution against a most desperate and unprincipled faction."

had been sincerely desirous of a junction with Mr. Pitt, upon fair principles, and really disposed to act with him cordially and zealously, the meeting for the purpose of discussing a new arrangement, would not have been prevented by the frivolous objections urged by the duke of Portland and Mr. Fox.

It may be farther remarked, that in rejecting the advice in question, his majesty was not only supported by the declared sentiments of the house of lords, a branch of the legislature co-ordinate with the house of commons; but the warm expressions of gratitude in the addresses presented to him from every part of the kingdom, for the dismission of his late ministers, and of confidence in those now in office, afforded him the strongest ground for believing, that he was himself acting in perfect conformity with the wishes of his subjects; and that the representatives of the people were maintaining principles, and pursuing a line of conduct, in direct contradiction to the will of the people themselves. Indeed without the approbation and concurrence of the public *, the king would scarcely have thought it expedient to resist the repeated applications of the house of commons. Nor would even the joint support of the house of lords, and of the people, have availed, unless Mr. Pitt had possessed, not only very superior talents for debate, but a firmness and composure †, which

* The king, in writing to Mr. Pitt, on the 22nd of February, and referring to the answer which he was to give to the address of the house of commons, voted on the 20th, said, "I trust that while the answer is drawn up with civility, it will be a clear support of my own rights, which the addresses from all parts of the kingdom, shew me the people feel essential to their liberties."

† Upon one occasion, his majesty wrote to Mr. Pitt, "I cannot conclude without expressing my fullest approbation of the conduct of Mr. Pitt, on Monday; in

rendered ineffectual the most violent personal attacks, and the most irritating language, ever remembered in parliament, or indeed which can possibly be conceived. Though these attacks and this language were continued through a series of eight weeks, it does not appear that he was once off his guard; or that, young as he was, he gave his adversaries an opportunity of taking advantage of a single hasty, or inconsiderate expression. With undaunted spirit and correct judgment he maintained the lawful rights of the crown, without trenching upon the constitutional privileges of parliament. He gained the favor of the people, while he defended the prerogative of the king. Loudly as his mode of coming into office was complained of, and bitter as were the invectives against him, no one ventured to assert, that any step which he had taken, or any opinion which he had delivered, rendered him unfit to serve the public. The utmost rancor of party spirit could only require, that he should share political power with others; and even the first department in government was not denied him by his most determined opponents. All the reproaches heaped upon him, and all the accusations directed against him, were resolvable into this simple fact, that he was not supported by a majority of the house of commons. And while his enemies were thus unable to fix upon him any positive charge of a serious nature, his abilities, his temper, his discretion, his courage, and his

particular his employing a razor against his antagonists, and never condescending to run into that rudeness, which, though common in that house certainly never becomes a gentleman; if he proceeds in this mode of oratory, he will bring debates into a shape more creditable, and correct that, as well as I trust many other evils, which time and temper can only effect."

CHAP. IV. 1784.

principles, became equally the objects of general praise and admiration. A minister, retaining his situation against the declared sense of the house of commons, was a new event in our parliamentary history, since the revolution; and the astonishment, arising from the novelty and supposed impossibility of the case, was greatly increased, by the consideration, that the person who was carrying on this unexampled struggle, had not yet completed his 25th year; and that he had, without the assistance of a single member of the cabinet, to contend with many persons of great abilities and experience, and particularly with two men of most distinguished talents, long accustomed to political warfare, who, after being for many years at the head of opposite parties, suddenly coalesced, for the purpose of forcing themselves into power; and who, being recently dismissed from office, were now endeavoring, with united strength, and by cordial co-operation, to seize the government a second time, against the will of their sovereign.

Mr. Fox took the more active part; and it is impossible for any one to read the debates, without admiring the ability and dexterity, with which he conducted the contest. He dwelt, with the most consummate art and ingenuity, upon topics calculated to procure himself favor with the house of commons, and with the public, and to excite odium against his opponents. He endeavored to persuade the house, that he was struggling for their importance, for maintaining their just and constitutional weight in the government of the country; and that his defeat would be followed by their loss of all real power. He carried the house from step to step—from resolution to resolution—and from address to address, each stronger than

than the preceding. He made an attempt, in the most cautious and least alarming manner, to withhold the supplies; and when that failed, he suggested, with the same wariness, the idea of a short mutiny bill. He failed again; but in both instances he contrived to hint at the proposal, and to abandon it, without committing himself, or alienating those, whose good opinion he most wished to retain. He declaimed against secret influence, a subject to which public feeling is generally alive; and described himself as a victim to court intrigue and private cabal in consequence of his known attachment to the cause of the people. He intimated, that the continuance of the present ministers in office, might lead to a repetition of those troubles and calamities, which, in the preceding century, had originated in a dispute between the king and his parliament, and had ended in a civil war, and the overthrow of the constitution. He tried the effect, both of the keenest invective and of well-judged compliment, upon Mr. Pitt: he even made concessions respecting his favorite India bill, with the hope of gaining credit for a moderate and conciliatory spirit; and that the whole blame of the present unsettled state of affairs might be imputed to Mr. Pitt, he professed a wish not to exclude him from office, but declared himself ready to form, in conjunction with him, such an administration, as the situation of the country demanded. In publicly speaking of the gentlemen, who met at the St. Alban's tavern, and in his private communications with their committee, he managed with so much address, that he attached to him several persons, who previously had not been favorably disposed to his principles or conduct. And when he had exhausted all the means of

CHAP. IV. 1784. direct attack and active opposition, he suffered public business to proceed without impediment or molestation, with a view to prevent a dissolution of parliament, by exciting a belief that it was not necessary to have recourse to that measure.

Great, however, as was the skill with which Mr. Fox acted throughout the contest, his exertions proved unsuccessful as to their main object; and his situation, at the end of the struggle, must have been truly mortifying to an ambitious man. At an early period of his life, he engaged, as has been mentioned, in an opposition to lord North, after having held office under him. Every year increased his weight and importance in the house of commons. He became confessedly the most powerful debater of his own party; and at length succeeded in driving lord North from the helm of government. In less than a twelvemonth from that time, he prevailed upon this noble lord, who had been prime minister for twelve years, and had numerous adherents, to join his standard, and to act a subordinate part to him, both in the cabinet and in parliament. Mr. Fox, the foreign secretary of state, was suffered to frame a plan, and bring forward a bill, relative to our possessions in India, which, according to established rule, belonged to the department of lord North, the home secretary of state; and in this, and in every other business, he acted as the first and efficient minister. This measure, however objectionable, was sanctioned by the most decided majorities in the house of commons. Mr. Pitt's eloquence was exerted in vain; and Mr. Fox, after exposing the weakness of his opponents, carried his bill, with unusual marks of triumph, to the house of lords; not doubting but it would pass that house, with the same

facility; and anticipating, as we may suppose, that continuance of power, which it was the object of the bill to secure. But, in the midst of these apparently well-grounded hopes and expectations, he met with a sudden and complete disappointment. The bill was rejected by the house of lords, and its author dismissed from his majesty's service. Still, however, Mr. Fox commanded a majority in the house of commons, with which immense advantage he openly asserted, that his immediate return to office was certain and inevitable; and he probably flattered himself, that he should derive additional strength from the failure of the attempt to exclude him from power. He might naturally imagine, that the youth and inexperience of Mr. Pitt, would not dare to resist a majority of the house of commons, to which every other minister had instantly yielded; and he might hope, that Mr. Pitt's acceptance of office under such circumstances, and his compelled relinquishment of it after so short a time—a consequence which would then have been represented as obvious to every one but himself—would fix upon him the imputation of rashness and presumption, and operate in a manner injurious to his character. Here Mr. Fox was again disappointed. He prevailed, indeed, as far as a majority was concerned, in every motion which he made in the house of commons, for two successive months*;

* Mr. Fox and his friends, during this contest, carried fourteen motions against Mr. Pitt, upon which the house divided; besides a great many other motions, upon which there was no division. The dates of those divisions, and the numbers which voted, were as follow:

January	12	232 to 193	majority		39
	—	196 to 142	do.		54
	16	205 to 184	do.		21
	23	222 to 214	do.		8

CHAP. IV. 1784.

but the most hostile resolutions against ministers, and the most importunate addresses to the throne, equally failed of producing their desired effect. Mr. Pitt persevered, boldly avowing his determination not to resign; and his majesty was no less firm in refusing to dismiss him. In the mean time, the people gave the most unequivocal proofs of their approbation of Mr. Pitt's conduct, and as strongly condemned that of his opponents. Public opinion must ever affect the votes of the house of commons. Mr. Fox's majorities gradually decreased; and the plain intimations, which he received from some of his most respectable supporters, convinced him, that if he proceeded to acts of greater violence, he should experience and proclaim the loss of that confidence, which had been his proudest boast, and the ground of all his pretensions. Unable, therefore, to take any farther step, without resource and without alternative, he felt himself under the humiliating necessity of giving up the contest, and of

February	2	223 to 204	majority		19
	3	211 to 187	do.		24
	16	186 to 157	do.		29
	18	208 to 196	do.		12
	20	197 to 177	do.		20
	—	177 to 156	do.		21
	27	175 to 168	do.		7
March	1	201 to 189	do.		12
	5	171 to 162	do.		9
	8	191 to 190	do.		1

Several of these debates were upon nearly the same question, and, in giving an account of them, the same opinions and arguments may in some instances have been repeated; but it was impossible, without noticing every motion and debate, to convey an adequate idea of the nature of the contest, or of the difficulties which Mr. Pitt had to encounter.

submitting to the rising fame and wonderful talents of a man, whose opposition, at the beginning of the struggle, he had considered as by no means formidable, and who was not only much younger than himself, but of an age at which no one had ever before attained either the same weight in parliament, the same situation in government, or the same popularity in the country. And to complete Mr. Fox's mortification, he could not but foresee, that the dissolution of parliament, which he had reason to expect would soon take place, must, in the present state of the public mind, still more diminish his own influence, and confirm the power of his rival.

I am aware, that in the present and in the former chapters, I have frequently mentioned Mr. Pitt's age; but as this is a peculiar and characteristic circumstance, clearly pointing out his superiority to every other political man that ever existed, I shall, I trust, be pardoned for the repetition. The most eminent statesmen, both in antient and in modern times, in this and in other nations, were scarcely known at the age of 25; and we have seen what situations Mr. Pitt filled, what powers he displayed, and what reputation he acquired, before he arrived at that period of life. He was not only at once the accomplished orator, but exhibited such maturity of understanding and correctness of judgment, with so perfect a knowledge of every subject, foreign and domestic, which came under consideration, and proved himself so entirely competent to all the arduous duties of his high station in the senate, in the cabinet, and in the detail of official business, without the preparation and experience which other men had invariably required, that his political opponent, lord North, pronounced

CHAP. IV. 1784.

him "born a minister;" and Mr. Gibbon declared, that "in all his researches in antient and modern history, he had no where met with his parallel, who, at so young a period of life, had so important a trust reposed in him, which he had discharged with so much credit to himself, and with so much advantage to the kingdom."

CHAPTER THE FIFTH:

1784.

Mr. Pitt elected for the University of Cambridge — Westminster Election — Meeting of Parliament — Mr. Pitt's Finance Measures — His India Bill — End of Session.

AT the election for the city of London, one of the first which took place in consequence of the dissolution of parliament, Mr. Pitt, without any previous communication with him, was put in nomination, and the shew of hands was declared to be in his favor; but he declined the poll. He was much importuned to stand for the city of Bath, which his father had represented, and likewise for several other cities and towns; but all these invitations he also declined, having, immediately after the dissolution, offered himself again for the university of Cambridge. He, and his friend lord Euston, prevailed against Mr. John Townshend and Mr. Mansfield *, who had represented the university in the last parliament, and were now supported by all the interest and exertions of opposition. This was a great political triumph to Mr. Pitt; and it was highly gratifying to his feelings to be chosen to represent the place of his education. Numerous applications were made to him from different parts of the kingdom, to recommend

* Mr. Townshend had been a lord of the admiralty, and Mr. Mansfield solicitor general, during the coalition administration, and both had opposed Mr. Pitt in the late struggle. Mr. Pitt had 334 votes, lord Euston 288, Mr. Townshend 267, and Mr. Mansfield 181.

CHAP. V. 1784.

candidates; and so many contests terminated in favor of his friends, that upwards of 160 persons, who had voted againt him in the former parliament, did not obtain seats in this; among whom were several gentlemen of the greatest influence, from private character, family connexions, and extensive property. In most counties, and in most boroughs, where the electors were independent, the pledge to support Mr. Pitt, in the house of commons, was sufficient to secure success against a competitor, known to be of opposite principles. The result of this general election was, at once a decisive proof of the weight possessed by the people, and of their loyalty to their sovereign; and it was afterwards urged as an argument against the necessity for a reform in parliament.

THE election for the city of Westminster attracted particular attention, and was the cause of much and interesting discussion in the new parliament. The candidates were, lord Hood, sir Cecil Wray, and Mr. Fox; the two former of whom were professedly attached to Mr. Pitt; and sir Cecil Wray and Mr. Fox had represented Westminster in the last parliament. The election began on the 1st of April, and lasted till the 17th of May, when it was closed by the high bailiff, who conceived he had no right to continue the poll beyond the day on which the writs were made returnable. Lord Hood was at the head of the poll, and Mr. Fox had a majority of 235 above sir Cecil Wray, the numbers being for lord Hood, 6,694; for Mr. Fox, 6,233; and for sir Cecil Wray, 5,998. There was strong reason to believe, that many of Mr. Fox's votes were illegal, which induced sir Cecil Wray to demand a scrutiny, and the high bailiff to grant it. The high bailiff, therefore,

unable to make a regular return, only certified to the sheriffs the above circumstances, with a declaration of his intention to proceed upon the scrutiny with all practicable dispatch. In the mean time, Mr. Fox took his seat for the Scotch boroughs of Tain, Dingwall, Dornock, Wick, and Kirkwall, for which he had been elected, through the interest of sir Thomas Dundas.

PARLIAMENT met on the 18th of May; and upon the motion in the house of commons, for the choice of a speaker, Mr. Fox took occasion to complain, that the representation of the people was incomplete, from the want of a return of two persons to serve for the city of Westminster; and he gave notice, that, on the earliest possible day, the conduct of the high bailiff, which he called, unwarrantable and criminal, would be brought under the consideration of the house. Mr. Pitt in reply, merely observed, that when the proper time should come for the discussion of the question, he had no doubt but it would receive the attention it deserved: in the mean while he trusted, that the harsh epithets of the right honorable gentleman would not have any influence upon the house, or excite any prejudice against the object of them.

On the 19th, his majesty, after approving Mr. Cornwall, who had been unanimously chosen speaker, delivered the following speech from the throne:

"My lords, and gentlemen,

"I have the greatest satisfaction in meeting you in parliament at this time, after recurring, in so important a moment,

CHAP. V. 1784.

to the sense of my people. I have a just and confident reliance, that you are animated with the same sentiments of loyalty, and the same attachment to our excellent constitution, which I have had the happiness to see so fully manifested in every part of the kingdom. The happy effects of such a disposition will, I doubt not, appear in the temper and wisdom of your deliberations, and in the dispatch of the important objects of public business, which demand your attention. It will afford me peculiar pleasure to find, that the exercise of the power intrusted to me by the constitution, has been productive of consequences so beneficial to my subjects, whose interests and welfare are always nearest my heart."

"Gentlemen of the house of Commons,

"I have ordered the estimates of the current year to be laid before you, and I trust to your zeal and affection to make such provisions for their farther supply, and for the application of the sums granted in the last parliament, as may appear to be necessary.

"I sincerely lament every addition to the burthens of my people, but they will, I am persuaded, feel the necessity, after a long and expensive war, of effectually providing for the maintenance of the national faith, and our public credit, so essential to the power and prosperity of the state."

"My lords and gentlemen,

"The alarming progress of frauds in the revenue, accompanied in so many instances with violence, will not fail on every account to excite your attention. I must, at the same

time, recommend to your most serious consideration, to frame such commercial regulations as may appear immediately necessary, in the present moment. The affairs of the East India company form an object of deliberation, deeply connected with the general interests of the country. While you feel a just anxiety to provide for the good government of our possessions in that part of the world, you will, I trust, never lose sight of the effect which any measure, to be adopted for that purpose, may have on our own constitution, and our dearest interests at home. You will find me always desirous to concur with you, in such measures as may be of lasting benefit to my people: I have no wish but to consult their prosperity, by a constant attention to every object of national concern, by a uniform adherence to the true principles of our free constitution, and by supporting and maintaining, in their just balance, the rights and privileges of every branch of the legislature."

Several days being required for swearing in the members, business did not begin in the house of commons till the 24th, on which day Mr. Lee* called the attention of the house to the Westminster election, before the motion for an address to his majesty, usual at the opening of every session: he contended, that the high bailiff had acted contrary to law, in not returning those two persons who had the majority of votes, when he finally closed the poll on the 17th of May; and made a motion to that effect. Sir Lloyd Kenyon, master of the rolls,

* Mr. Lee had been first solicitor general, and then attorney general, during the coalition administration.

CHAP. V. 1784.

objected to the motion, as it censured the conduct of the high bailiff, without giving him an opportunity of defending himself. He maintained, that the high bailiff was justified in not making a return, and in granting a scrutiny, there being no other means of ascertaining which of the candidates had a majority of legal votes; and therefore moved the previous question, which, after short speeches from Mr. Pitt, Mr. Fox, lord North, and several other members, was carried by a majority of 283 to 136. Mr. Lee, having failed in obtaining an immediate return for the city of Westminster, moved, that the high bailiff should appear at the bar of the house of commons the next day, to which no objection was made.

This point being settled, Mr. Hamilton* moved an address to the king, in answer to the speech from the throne, in which he proposed to return his majesty thanks for the dissolution of parliament; a measure, to which his majesty had been graciously pleased to have recourse, in compliance with the earnest wishes of the people, who highly disapproved the conduct of the late house of commons. In moving this address, Mr. Hamilton spoke in warm terms of commendation, both of the public and private character of Mr. Pitt, "who, at a most momentous crisis, had stood forward the successful champion of the constitution, and in whom the fondest hopes of the nation were justly reposed."

Lord Surry expressed his concern, that he could not assent to the whole of the address, which had been moved. He said, that it was far from his intention or desire to find any fault with the panegyric, which the honorable mover of the address

* Afterwards marquis of Abercorn.

had thought proper to pronounce on the present minister. No man admired the talents of that right honorable gentleman more than he did; nor was there a person within those walls who more sincerely wished him a fair opportunity of displaying his great and distinguished abilities, with advantage to his country, and honor to himself: of his integrity he was fully persuaded; and of his determination to preserve his high character free from reproach and impeachment of every kind, he had not the smallest doubt. After this candid exordium, he proceeded to state objections to that part of the address, which returned thanks to his majesty for the late dissolution of parliament, and moved, by way of amendment, that it should be omitted. Several members, in supporting the original address, spoke of Mr. Pitt's popularity; and acknowledged that they owed their elections to its being understood, that they were attached to his cause. Lord North, Mr. Fox, and Mr. Adam, supported the amendment, and argued for the omission of the objectionable clause, that the address might be voted unanimously.

Mr. Pitt, rising at the end of the debate, said, that he was fully convinced of the importance of unanimity, and extremely desirous of procuring it, if real unanimity could be obtained; but he was not for purchasing a hollow unanimity, by blinking a great constitutional question, and passing over the dissolution of the last parliament, when it was so clearly established, that it had given the most solid satisfaction throughout the kingdom. As, on the one hand, he was not willing to blink that great question, for the sake of the unanimity of an hour; so, on the other, he was not afraid to state fairly, how far he did conceive

CHAP. V. 1784.

that the present address would pledge the house, when they came hereafter to discuss the circumstances of the dissolution. If it should appear, that, in the conduct of the dissolution, there had been any trifling irregularity or error, he should think, that the present address precluded any censure for such informality. "But God forbid, that the address, or any thing else, should prevent any capital criminality, if criminality of that sort be suspected in the dissolution, from being fairly brought out, fully investigated, and, if proved, punished with due severity." Having said this, he mentioned, among the fortunate events which had recently occurred, the final conclusion of the definitive treaty of peace with the states general. He next adverted to the various arguments which had been used in the debate, and by collecting them severally from lord North, Mr. Adam, and Mr. Fox, and comparing the violences of the one with those of the other, threw an air of ridicule upon the whole. He took notice of Mr. Fox's having had the firmness still to glory in his India bill, although he lost, what he risqued, his power and situation by it. He said, that this firmness was not to be sufficiently admired; but, that Mr. Fox's declaring himself willing to bear the responsibility, was a little ridiculous, because, in the next sentence, he declared the responsibility to amount to nothing, as he could not be made personally liable to punishment, for having merely proposed a bill to parliament. The only responsibility the honorable gentleman was liable to, was the responsibility of character, and responsibility at the tribunal of the public. That sort of responsibility, Mr. Pitt observed, had already been brought to the test. Mr. Fox had been tried before the tribunal of the

public, who had almost unanimously found him guilty. He also noticed what lord North had said of the last parliament, and owned, that if any thing could be a justification of that parliament, the noble lord had stated its single merit, which would, indeed, serve to cover a multitude of sins, namely, that it had the virtue to put an end to his administration, and to the calamitous and ruinous war, which the noble lord had brought upon the country. He would not, he said, at that late hour, attempt to argue the case; but leaving it under the broad shield which the noble lord had thrown over it, he would proceed to take notice of two or three observations, which had fallen from the right honorable gentleman opposite to him (Mr. Fox,) and from the right honorable gentleman's friend behind him (Mr. Adam,) relative to the glorious check to the career of ministers, as it was called, the Westminster election. The ingenuity of the learned gentleman had found out, that the right honorable gentleman's (Mr. Fox's) election was almost unanimous, although they had that day been inquiring why no return had been made, and had learnt, that many thousands voted for two other candidates. But, said the learned gentleman, the success was wonderful, considering that the right honorable gentleman had to contend with the powers of public office, with the powers of the East India company, and with what the learned gentleman was pleased to term, popular phrenzy. "The right honorable gentleman," said Mr. Pitt, "has to lament, that he had to contend with the powers of public office, because he endeavored to subvert government. He has to lament, that he had to contend with the East India company, because he endeavored to seize upon

CHAP. V. 1784.

their property, and to violate their most sacred rights, sanctioned by charters, and secured to them by statutes. And he has to lament, that he had to contend with what is termed popular phrenzy, because the people at large have seen and condemned his conduct. But what allies the right honorable gentleman had to fight for him, is not noticed. The degree of influence used in his favor, has not been observed upon; nor any respect paid to those charms *, which alone can supersede every other consideration among us all, and command unanimity, when nothing else could command it." Having pursued this vein of mixed sarcasm and ridicule, Mr. Pitt took notice of Mr. Fox's glories not being confined to Westminster, but extended to the extremest corner of the island, to which the right honorable gentleman's partialities had not formerly gone:

Via prima salutis,
Quod minime reris, graiâ pandetur ab urbe.

His success at Ross and Kirkwall ought not, he thought, to be denied its share of praise; it was well entitled to

" Pursue the triumph, and partake the gale."

Mr. Pitt concluded his speech, by declaring, that he could not consent, either at the price of unanimity, or for any other consideration, that any part of the address should be altered. A division took place, in which 114 voted for the amendment,

* Mr. Pitt alluded to certain ladies, more distinguished for rank and beauty, than delicacy and propriety of conduct, who had canvassed for Mr. Fox during the Westminster contest.

and 282 against it; after which, the main question, for the address, was carried without a division.

This, and the former division upon the Westminster election, sufficiently indicated Mr. Pitt's strength in the new house of commons, fully justified the late dissolution, and proved his judgment, in waiting so long before he advised that measure. Had he, by yielding to the desire, which he could not but feel, of being relieved from a house of commons so hostile to him, and in compliance as well with the wishes of his friends, as the fear of his enemies, all of which must be allowed to have been powerful incitements, dissolved parliament at an earlier period, he might indeed have gained a small majority, but not that decided superiority of numbers which he now obtained, and which he preserved, while he continued in office; his own character, both for talents and principles, would not in that case, have been so completely developed and established; nor could he, which is a still more weighty consideration, have rendered those important services to his country, which he was now enabled to perform, by the confidence he had acquired, both in and out of parliament. The present situation of public affairs, and a succession of events which followed, required a strong, able, and energetic administration, to rescue the kingdom from the difficulties with which it was now surrounded, and to avert the dangers with which it was afterwards threatened.

The negative given to lord Surry's amendment, was considered as so unequivocal an approbation of the dissolution, that no direct question was brought forward upon the subject by opposition, and it was scarcely mentioned again during the session.

WHILE Mr. Pitt was struggling against majorities of the house of commons, after the failure of his India bill, it was impossible for him to bring forward any great public measure. As soon, however, as the new parliament met, having employed the intermediate time in making preparations, he applied his utmost industry to compensate for the delay, which the violence of party had occasioned.

Two subjects pre-eminently demanded immediate attention, the revenue of the country, and the affairs of the East India company.

A brief statement respecting the situation of the revenue, will incontrovertibly prove, what has been already mentioned in general terms, that the national income did not supply the means of supporting even a moderate peace establishment. In the year ending January 5th, 1784, the permanent taxes produced very little more than ten millions, which was nearly half a million less than the interest of the public funded debt, the civil list, and the appropriated duties for the payment of which they were the only security. Besides these charges, the annual expences of army, navy, ordnance, and miscellaneous services, estimated at four millions *, were to be defrayed, for which there was no provision, except the land and malt taxes, voted every year, and producing only about two millions and a half. From this comparison of the actual income, and unavoidable expenditure of the country, including only the funded part of the public debt, it appears that there was a deficiency of almost

* They in fact amounted to considerably more.

two millions a year in the revenue, which was principally owing to the failure in the estimated produce of the taxes, imposed by lord North, during the American war. There was also an enormous unfunded debt, the precise amount of which could not at present be ascertained, but which must necessarily be funded, and the interest provided for, so that the whole deficiency could not be considered as less than three millions a year, without any allowance for a sinking fund. To complete this melancholy picture, it is to be added, that though peace had been firmly established more than a twelvemonth, the three per cents were between 56 and 57, scarcely higher than at the most unfavorable period of the war, and much lower than immediately after the signature of the preliminary treaties.

Under these circumstances, it was a matter of the most urgent necessity to improve the income of the country, and to raise public credit, which could only be effected by making existing taxes more productive, and by imposing new ones.

Mr. Pitt was convinced, that nothing would tend more directly to promote the former of those important objects, than the suppression of smuggling, which at this time prevailed to an alarming and almost incredible extent, and seemed to be destroying the very vitals of the revenue. It was the chief source of the frauds so long and so loudly complained of; and every endeavor to check its growth, had hitherto proved completely ineffectual. Forty thousand persons were supposed to be engaged, by sea and by land, in the various branches of this contraband trade, with large and connected capitals, from which an immense profit was derived. Vessels of a considerable size, some of 300 tons burden, lay out at sea, and

CHAP. V. 1784.

delivered their cargoes to colliers and other small vessels, which landed the different articles along the coast, where armed men were stationed to receive and protect them, till they were disposed of to the retail dealers. Thus did smugglers not only act contrary to law, but they set the law at defiance; and a more daring and desperate set of people never perhaps infested any civilized nation. They resisted any force sent against them; and both the property, and the persons of magistrates and of private individuals, who ventured to interrupt their illegal practices, were exposed to every species of revenge and injury. "Not merely the revenue," said captain Macbride, "is affected by smuggling, though that would be mischief enough; but the agriculture and manufactures of the island are in danger of being ruined. The farmers near the coast have already changed their occupation; and instead of employing their horses in tilling the soil, they use them for the more advantageous purpose of carrying smuggled goods to a distance from the shore. The manufacturers will catch the contagion, and the loom and the anvil will be deserted. In former wars, the smugglers had not conducted themselves as enemies to their country; but in the late war, they enticed away sailors from the king's ships, concealed such as deserted, gave intelligence to the enemy, and did every thing in their power hostile to the interest of Great Britain."

To remedy this great and increasing evil, Mr. Pitt thought it right, first to introduce a bill, which should be calculated to prevent smuggling in general, and then to propose regulations respectively applicable to those articles which were its principal support.

By the provisions of his general bill, the right of seizing vessels of a certain description, and under certain circumstances *, with their cargoes, was extended from the distance of two † to four leagues from the coast; all forfeited vessels, except such as might be fit for his majesty's service, were directed to be destroyed, that they might not fall again into the hands of smugglers; the building of vessels of certain dimensions and burden, which it was known were solely or chiefly used in smuggling, was prohibited; armed vessels were not allowed beyond a certain distance from the coast, without licence from the admiralty; the rules respecting clearance were made much stricter than they had hitherto been, to guard against the practice of vessels sailing out of port in ballast, and afterwards being employed in smuggling; and it was made a capital felony to shoot at or upon any ship, vessel, or boat, belonging to his majesty's navy, or in the service of the customs or excise, or to shoot at or wound any officer of his majesty's navy, or revenue officer, or persons assisting them in the execution of their duty. No objection was made to the principle of this bill; and in the debates which took place upon

* "Having on board any brandy or other spirituous liquors, in any vessel or cask, which shall not contain 60 gallons at the least (excepting only for the use of the seamen then belonging to, and on board, such ship or vessel, not exceeding two gallons for each seaman,) or having on board any wine in casks (provided such ship or vessel having wine on board, shall not exceed sixty tons burden,) or having six pounds weight of tea, or twenty pounds weight of coffee, or having on board any goods whatsoever liable to forfeiture, by any act of parliament, upon being imported into Great Britain." 24 Geo. 3, c. 47, sect. 1.

† By the Hovering Act, as it was called, which passed four years before, vessels might be seized within two leagues of the coast.

CHAP. V. 1784.

some of its clauses, the friends and the opponents of government shewed the same disposition to make it as effectual as possible. It passed both houses, without a single division, having received considerable improvement by the suggestions of different members of the house of commons.

In aid of this general bill, Mr. Pitt brought forward two others, one of which was directed against the contraband trade in tea, and the other in spirits; the two articles, in which smugglers dealt by much the most largely.

Tea, indeed, was called "the staple of smuggling;" and the following statement will shew, that it had a just claim to that appellation.

From the most correct estimate which could be made, there was reason to think, that thirteen millions* of pounds of tea were annually consumed in this kingdom; and it was certain, that not more than five millions and a half were sold by the East India company: seven millions and a half therefore were smuggled every year. So systematic was this trade become, that tea companies were formed in the commercial towns upon the continent, for the purpose of supplying our smugglers; and the servants of our own East India company remitted to Europe their private fortunes, acquired in India, by means of tea sent in foreign vessels, consigned to foreign companies, and afterwards smuggled into this country. There were supposed to be at this time, five millions of pounds of tea

* About 19 millions of pounds were exported every year from China to Europe; and consequently only 6 millions were consumed upon the whole continent; that is, not half the quantity consumed in England.

at Hamburgh, and three millions at Ostend, besides considerable quantities at other places, all destined for the smuggling trade of England. It was generally agreed, that while the present high duties upon tea, and consequently the great profits to smugglers, continued, it would be in vain to expect, that any law, however strict, or any punishment, however severe, would materially check this mischievous but lucrative trade. The great difficulty was, to find that medium, which, while it defeated the purposes of the smuggler, by leaving him no inducement to go on with his fraudulent practices, should not take from the revenue more than was absolutely necessary to accomplish the object for which the duties were to be diminished. These duties, partly custom house, and partly excise, amounting together to fifty per cent upon the value, and to two shillings and seven pence, upon the average, for every pound of tea, produced rather more than seven hundred thousand pounds a year. To remove all temptation to purchase smuggled tea, and of course to destroy the trade, it was necessary to enable the fair trader to sell at the same price the smuggler could, which it was impossible to effect without reducing the duties, so as to leave them no more than equal to the expence of smuggling, and that would cause a much greater diminution in their produce, than the revenue would bear, without a substitute. Mr. Pitt therefore felt it incumbent upon him to put a stop to the smuggling of tea, and, at the same time, not to injure the revenue; and his plan was this:—He proposed to repeal all the present duties upon tea, and in future to make the different sorts, according to their respective value, subject to a custom house duty of only 12½ per cent, which

CHAP. V. 1784.

would very considerably lower the price of tea, purchased of the fair dealer. This small duty would produce about 170,000*l.* a year, and therefore the revenue would, in this respect, suffer an annual loss of between 5 and 600,000*l.* To compensate for this defalcation, he farther proposed to increase the tax upon windows; and then the effect of these two operations would be, that the people would experience a commutation of taxes. Instead of the greater part of the present duties upon tea, they would pay an additional duty upon windows; so arranged by Mr. Pitt, that every individual, who now bought tea legally imported*, as well as the public revenue, would gain by the change. All houses, in number about 200,000, which did not pay to church and poor, were to be entirely exempted; and consequently the inhabitants of those houses, being of the poorest sort, would be relieved from almost the whole present tax upon tea, without being called upon to pay any other tax in its room. This new tax upon windows, and the duty intended to be retained upon tea, would together produce 900,000*l.* a year, and therefore the revenue would annually gain nearly 200,000*l.* without allowing for any increase in the quantity of tea imported. Besides the prevention of smuggling, the extension of the fair trade, the saving to all honest householders, the improvement to the revenue, and the exemption of tea-dealers from the visits of excisemen, the East India company, by selling a much larger quantity of tea,

* As an example, Mr. Pitt said, that the master of a house, with nine windows, which would be rated at 10*s.* 6*d.* might be supposed to consume annually in his family seven pounds of tea; the difference between the old and new duties upon which would be, upon an average, 1*l.* 5*s.* 10*d.*; and, consequently, such a family would save 15*s.* 4*d.* by the commutation.

would be materially benefited, which might of itself be considered a public advantage; more especially, as the encreased demand for tea, legally imported, would cause the company to employ twenty additional ships, and two thousand additional seamen; and the whole profit of the tea trade would be confined to this country, and to fair dealers, which was now shared, in a large proportion, by foreign companies, and the subjects of this kingdom, who enriched themselves by defrauding its revenue.

But, although this commutation tax, as it has since been called, had all these recommendations, it met with some opposition in the house of commons; and Mr. Fox, in particular, objected to it, as being compulsory, that is, compelling people to pay for drinking tea, whether they drank it or not, because every householder must pay the window-tax. This objection was not considered as having much weight; since, in point of fact, there was scarcely a family in the kingdom, rich or poor, in which tea was not used; and it was admitted, that all who did not buy smuggled tea, would gain by this substitute. It was urged, as another objection, that it was rash and hazardous to meddle with a tax so productive as that of tea, notwithstanding the acknowledged prevalence of smuggling. To which it was replied, that it would be justifiable to run some risque, with the prospect of attaining so much good; but that, in truth, there was little or no danger to the revenue, as the new tax upon windows, and the reduced tax upon tea, could not fail to produce their estimated amount; the old taxes upon those articles, affording a certain ground for calculation. Mr. Fox, finding that these objections were of no avail, expressed a wish

CHAP. V. 1784.

that the business should be deferred to another year; but to this, Mr. Pitt would not consent, as the evil, which it was intended to correct, was of a very serious nature; and the expectation of such a measure as the present, would tend to increase illicit trade in the intermediate time. The bill, therefore, proceeded, and passed the house of commons, with only one division, upon a motion for its re-commitment, which was negatived by 143 to 40. It passed the house of lords, without any division, and with only one short debate.

THE same observation, which was made respecting the high duties upon tea, was applicable to those upon spirits, namely, that while they continued, it would be in vain to expect any considerable diminution in the smuggling of spirits. Great frauds also were committed upon the distillery of spirits at home; to such a degree, indeed, that the distillery from molasses, in the city of London, produced to the revenue, 32,000*l.* in 1778, and only 1,098*l.* in 1783, which must have been owing to new contrivances for evading the duties. Mr. Pitt, therefore, brought forward a bill, by which the duties payable upon British spirits were regulated and enforced, and those on foreign spirits considerably reduced; and it being expected, that the revenue would be fully indemnified for this reduction of duties, by the increased consumption of spirits, legally imported, no substitute, as in the case of tea, was thought necessary. The bill passed both houses, with scarcely any discussion; but being considered as an experiment, it was to continue in force only two years.

These three bills, upon a subject which had for some time

excited alarm and complaint, both in parliament and in the country, were received with very general satisfaction, except by those who were interested in the continuance of the unlawful traffic, which they were intended to destroy; and it will hereafter appear, that they completely answered their purpose, and had, in several respects, a most beneficial effect.

I now proceed to give an account of what is commonly called the budget, which Mr. Pitt brought forward on the 30th of June, and which of course included the consideration of new taxes. He began by observing, that the necessities of the country rendered the business of the day more heavy, and consequently more irksome, than it had ever been to any minister, upon any former occasion: and he undertook it with a perfect sense how unequal he was to the task, and how much he stood in need of the indulgence of the house. He had, however, the comfort of reflecting, that these necessities were not created by him; he found them in his office; they were entailed upon him by his predecessors; and he felt himself under the indispensable obligation of entering upon a most important weight of finance and taxation, as he must not suffer personal considerations to interfere with the duties of his situation. He had confidence in the good sense and patriotism of the people of England, that they would cheerfully submit to those burdens, which, upon winding up the accounts of the late unfortunate and most expensive war, still remained to be imposed; and he assured the house, that his majesty's present ministers had attended with the utmost assiduity to the reduction of expence in every branch of the public service, the

CHAP. V. 1784. effect of which, he trusted, would be hereafter felt. In the mean time, he threw himself upon the generosity and candor of the house, while he proceeded to state the financial circumstances of the nation, and to provide for its pressing exigencies.

The topics discussed by Mr. Pitt, in his speech, were, the services of the current year, the ways and means of raising the money for defraying the expences of those services, the loan, the funding a part of the unfunded debt, and new taxes.

The services of the year consisted of the six following articles; the army, the navy, the ordnance, a debt due to the bank, deficiencies in the grants and taxes of former years, and miscellaneous services. The army estimates amounted to upwards of four millions; the navy, to rather more than three millions; the ordnance, to rather more than 600,000*l.*; the debt due to the bank of England, was two millions, which had been lent to the public in 1781, without interest, for the renewal of their charter, and which were now become due; the deficiencies of former years, amounted to more than a million and half; and the miscellaneous services, which it is not necessary to enumerate, amounted to nearly 300,000*l.* including 60,000*l.* for the arrears of the civil list. The total amount of all these various services was about 12 millions, exclusively of the exchequer bills in circulation, not charged on any fund, for the payment of which, Mr. Pitt proposed, that other exchequer bills should be issued.

The directors of the bank were willing that the debt, due to them, should be postponed to another year; and thus the

sum actually required was reduced from twelve to ten millions; towards which the land and malt taxes, the sinking fund, certain surplusses, and savings from army services of former years, would furnish four millions, and consequently there remained six millions to be procured by loan.

Former ministers had made loans and lotteries the source of patronage, and the means of gain to their friends and supporters, at the expence of the nation. Mr. Pitt determined to adopt a new mode of borrowing the money, and of disposing of the lottery, which should have no other object in view than the benefit of the public. Conformably to which determination, he gave notice, through the governor and deputy governor of the bank, to the monied men in the city, that he was ready to contract for the loan, with those who would offer the lowest terms, and that the lottery tickets should be distributed among the persons who lent the money, in proportion to the sums lent. This produced, as was expected, a competition. Two sets of bidders were formed, who made proposals, sealed up, which were opened in the presence of the governor and deputy governor of the bank; and Mr. Pitt accepted the terms which were the lowest *. The gentlemen who offered those terms, had the whole of the loan and lottery, except the usual reserve for the public companies. Mr. Pitt had not the disposal of

* These terms were, that each subscriber of 100*l.* in money should have 100*l.* 3 per cents, 50*l.* 4 per cents, 5*s.* 6*d.* long annuity, and $\frac{3}{4}$ths of a lottery ticket. The mode of bidding was this: Mr. Pitt informed the monied men, that 100*l.* in the 3 per cents, 50*l.* in the 4 per cents, and $\frac{3}{4}$ths of a lottery ticket were fixed; and that the offer of those who proposed the least long annuity should be accepted. The long annuity was for 75$\frac{1}{2}$ years, being to terminate with the existing long annuities.

CHAP. V. 1784.

a single shilling. By these means the interest of the public was consulted, and all possibility of private favor or influence precluded. The charge upon the public, in consequence of this loan, amounted to 315,000 *l.* a year, being rather more than five per cent, and certainly less than it would have been, if the loan had been negotiated in the same manner as in former years.

The navy and victualling bills, and ordnance debentures, which formed a very considerable part of the unfunded debt, amounted together, at this time, to nearly fourteen millions. Mr. Pitt was very desirous of funding the whole of that sum in the present session; but finding it necessary, when he was in treaty for the loan, to explain his intention respecting the unfunded debt, the money-lenders informed him, that so large a quantity of stock, coming at once into the market, would materially depress the price of the stocks, and cause both bargains, for the loan and for the unfunded debt, to be made upon worse terms. He decided therefore to fund only 6,600,000 *l.* He gave way indeed to this suggestion of the money-lenders, the more readily, as he hoped he should be able to fund more advantageously in the next year. Mr. Pitt, at this time, like many other persons, had a predilection in favor of a fund at a high rate of interest, as it would create a less quantity of stock, and facilitate the means of redemption; and if agreements could be made in a high and in a low fund, upon the same terms, there is no doubt but a high fund* would be more

* Lord North, in a debate upon lord John Cavendish's budget in 1783, said, that "the notions entertained about a 5 per cent fund were erroneous. He had endeavored to borrow upon such a fund, but had been unable to contract any

advantageous to the public. But the monied men and stock-holders had a great dislike to a high fund; being persuaded, that from the very circumstance of its being more easily redeemed, it would never bear an equivalent price, compared with that of lower funds*. Mr. Pitt, however, contended, that in every financial operation, redemption at a future time ought to be kept in view; and therefore he determined in funding these navy and victualling bills, and ordnance debentures, to try the experiment of a five per cent fund. He wished also to have made the loan in that fund, but he found the objections of the money-lenders so strong against it, that he thought it would be risquing too much, upon the first attempt of this sort, to hazard the funding of so large a sum, as the loan and unfunded debt would jointly amount to, in opposition to the sentiments of those who ought to be competent judges upon the subject. According to the present price of the existing funds, a five per cent fund ought to be at 95, but in his calcu-

beneficial bargain. It was an error to suppose, that the money lenders would lend at par. It was also an error to suppose, that the five per cents might be the soonest redeemed: for persons lending upon this fund, stipulate invariably the condition, that the annuity should be irredeemable for 15 years. The public, being thus obliged to pay the annuity for so great a number of years, would incur a greater loss by this plan, than by borrowing upon a 3 per cent fund. His information had come to him, in the course of actual business, and might be depended upon. As to theoretical ideas, they might appear very beautiful, and sound well in a debate, but the moment they were applied to affairs, they would tumble to the ground, and become baseless like the fabric of a vision."

* As the 4 per cents were lower in proportion than the 3 per cents, they concluded that the 5 per cents would be lower than the 4 per cents, which proved to be the fact.

lation he took it only at 93*; and as a farther inducement to the holders of the bills and debentures to subscribe to this new fund, he made it irredeemable, and the interest irreducible, till 25 millions of the three or four per cents should be redeemed: The fund thus created, would require an interest of rather more than 315,000*l.* There would still remain in the market, seven millions of these bills and debentures, which would bear an interest of four per cent, and for this interest, amounting to 280,000*l.* a year, Mr. Pitt intended to provide; the consequence of which would be, that when these bills and debentures should hereafter be funded, no interest would be wanted, except the difference between four per cent and the rate at which they should be funded, which in any case must be an inconsiderable sum. The whole, therefore, of the interest now to be provided for, consisting of the interest of the loan, and the two parts of the bills and debentures, was 910,000*l.* a year; and Mr. Pitt, exhausted as the country was, undertook to find taxes which should produce that enormous sum.

"This," he said, "was a task extremely difficult and extremely painful; but, at the same time, it was very important for public credit, which was at present in a very depressed state, that provision should be made, as early as circumstances would allow, for the whole of the outstanding debt. The first consideration to which it was incumbent upon him to attend,

* The effect of this was, that the public paid about two shillings per cent interest, more than they would have done on a 3 per cent fund, for the probability of making the redemption hereafter upon better terms.

in the choice of additional taxes, was, to fix upon such as should be most likely to be most productive, without being liable to any fundamental and capital objection. It was impossible, as every one must be convinced, that taxes should be very productive, and not burthensome. Every tax must be disliked by that class of men, on whom it operated most sensibly; and therefore their murmuring ought not to defeat it, when all others were convinced of its utility and propriety." The taxes proposed by him, were upon hats, ribbands, gauzes, coals at the pit's mouth, horses, linens, and calicoes, candles, licences to dealers in exciseable commodities, bricks and tiles, certificates for killing game, paper, and hackney coaches. After a detailed explanation in what manner and to what degree he designed to make the several articles in this long catalogue subject to taxation, he added, "it would be vain and idle to suppose all or any of these taxes unexceptionable; but the necessities of the public did not leave it in his option to deal otherwise than openly and fairly. The wants of government were many; the finances of the country had been much reduced; and it was proper, it was indispensable, to look our real situation manfully in the face. It had been his desire to do so; and under that impression, he produced the list of taxes, to which he called the deliberation and assistance of the committee. The whole would, he trusted, amount to somewhat more than the sum which he had proposed to raise; but several deficiencies might occur, which could not either be foreseen or prevented."

Towards the end of his speech, Mr. Pitt said, that if, notwithstanding his endeavor to express himself clearly and

intelligibly, doubts should remain with any gentleman, upon any one of the great variety of subjects, upon which he had been compelled to trouble them, he would rise again, and be happy to give every satisfaction in his power. He hoped that the committee, when they reflected upon the business of the day, would be convinced, that he had done what his duty directed, without regard to his own inclination or ease. He was not conscious of having left any matter untouched, which it was important for the house and for the public to be apprised of: on the contrary, he had studied to do, what he held to be the indispensable duty of every person honored with the high office he held, namely, to disguise nothing from the public, which affected their real interest, but to bring forward every particular of that nature; and however great the personal risque and inconvenience, however great the danger of incurring popular odium, by imposing heavy burdens on the people, might be, not to shrink from that painful act of duty, if such burdens were required by the exigency of affairs.

The readiness and perspicuity, with which Mr. Pitt went through this mass of financial detail and dry calculation, his extensive and minute information upon every point which he discussed, the manly spirit with which he met the difficulties of the country, the exertions he made to raise public credit and improve the revenue at the hazard of losing the favor of the people, the judgment with which he selected taxes, to a greater amount than had ever been proposed on any one day before, his determination to negotiate the loan in a manner most advantageous to the public, and his disinterestedness in foregoing all patronage, in the distribution both of the loan

and of the lottery, procured for him the commendation of his most determined political opponents. Mr. Fox acknowledged, that Mr. Pitt "had infinite merit in having brought forward so much of the unfunded debt in the course of the present session: too much praise could not be given him, on that head." Mr. Dempster said, that Mr. Pitt "had discharged his duty manfully and ably. It was an arduous and invidious task to impose taxes upon the people; and when a chancellor of the exchequer met the difficulties with becoming courage, he ought to be supported; and he should have his support."

The only tax, of which any material disapprobation was expressed, was that upon coals; and such powerful objections were afterwards urged against it, as being likely to be injurious to several of our manufactures, as well as oppressive to the poor, that Mr. Pitt was induced to abandon it; and he also relinquished his intention of requiring the planters of hops, included in exciseable commodities, to take out a licence, as he understood, that it would be very severely felt by those who grew only small quantities of that article. In the room of these, he substituted taxes upon gold and silver plate, upon lead exported, upon ale licences, race horses, and the postage of letters, together with regulations relative to franking, which were calculated to increase the revenue of the post office; and he changed the tax upon ribbands and gauzes, for one upon the importation of raw silk.

The day Mr. Pitt opened the budget, he moved 133 resolutions, and several others on following days, in consequence of the substitutes and alterations which have been mentioned;

CHAP. V. 1784.

and all the numerous bills founded upon them, passed with very little difficulty. They gave rise, however, to several debates; and the candor with which Mr. Pitt listened to every observation, the quickness with which he availed himself of every useful suggestion, the dexterity with which he obviated every real objection, by modifications and provisions suited to each particular case, and at the same time his acuteness in exposing captious cavils, and his firmness in resisting all unfounded opposition, gained him universal admiration and applause.

Such were Mr. Pitt's measures in the present session, upon the subject of finance. It may be proper to observe, that the appropriation act of this year included the supplies which had been voted in the last session as well as in the present; no appropriation having taken place prior to the dissolution, except that the charge of the militia was to be defrayed out of the land-tax. The members, who had objected to the dissolution on this ground, and had threatened a serious inquiry into the subject in the new parliament, suffered this appropriation act to pass in its usual course, without a single remark. Nor was any bill of indemnity passed, or even called for, by those who had, in the old parliament, declared, that it would be necessary in case of a dissolution. The truth was, that it had always been customary, as has been noticed, to apply the money to the respective services, before an appropriation act was passed, and Mr. Pitt did this after a dissolution had taken place; which, though never done before, and forbidden

by a resolution of the last parliament, was no violation of any law; and when calmly considered, was not thought to involve any real difference of principle.

I AM now to give an account of the bills which Mr. Pitt introduced, relative to the East India company.

It must first be premised, that on the 23rd of the preceding January, Mr. Eden moved, that the directors of the East India company should inform the house, what mode and extent of parliamentary interference they considered necessary to afford effectual relief to the company, with respect to the payment of duties, and the acceptance of bills, together with the accounts and estimates on which their opinions were founded. This motion was agreed to; and in obedience to it, the directors, on the 16th of February, presented a report to the house of commons, containing a detailed statement of the affairs of the company, and of the assistance of which they stood in need from parliament; and they concluded with asserting, that the company, notwithstanding its present pecuniary embarrassment, was "not only solvent, but possessed of an immense property." On the 11th of March, Mr. Eden made some general strictures upon this report, with several parts of which he expressed himself dissatisfied; and that so important a document might undergo a complete and careful examination, and its correctness or incorrectness be clearly ascertained, he moved, that it should be referred to a select committee. To this motion Mr. Pitt gave his assent; and a committee of 15 persons was accordingly appointed, of whom Mr. Eden was chosen chairman; but the dissolution of parliament taking

CHAP. V. 1784.

place soon afterwards, they were not able to make any report, although they had been very diligent in preparing materials for that purpose.

On the 26th of May, a few days after the meeting of the new parliament, the East India company presented a petition to the house of commons, stating their inability to discharge at present the debt due to the public; and that under existing circumstances, they were incapacitated, by law, from accepting bills drawn in India, and from making a dividend; and praying for such relief as to the house should seem meet. As soon as this petition was laid upon the table, Mr. Pitt moved, that the directors should communicate to the house, such information as they had received since they drew up their report of the 16th of February. In consequence of this motion, the directors made another report to the house, on the first of June; and Mr. Pitt immediately moved, that both reports should be referred to a select committee. And that the materials already collected, might be made useful, he farther proposed, that the committee should consist of the same persons as had formed the committee in the last parliament, with the exception of four, three of whom were not members of the present parliament, and one declined acting. In their room, four others were substituted, one of whom, Mr. Dundas, was chosen chairman. This committee made their report to the house, on the 22nd of June, and it was ordered to be printed.

On the 24th, before the printed copies were delivered, Mr. Pitt informed the house, that it had been his intention not to bring forward any question relative to the East India company, till gentlemen should have had leisure to consider

attentively the report, which had been presented to the house by their committee; but he had that day been reminded of a circumstance, which, though mentioned in the company's petition, had escaped his recollection, of so pressing a nature, that it was necessary for him to trouble the house with a motion relative to it immediately. By the regulating act of 1773, the company was restrained from making a dividend, without the authority of parliament, when its bond debt should exceed a certain sum, which was the case at present; and according to established practice, any dividend intended to be made on the 5th of July, should be declared before the end of the month of June, There was therefore, he said, a necessity for passing a bill, with all possible expedition, to enable the company to make a dividend, as he concluded all parties would agree, there ought to be some dividend, whatever difference of opinion there might be concerning its amount. For his part, considering that the credit of the company, and perhaps of something more than the company, was at stake, he should wish the dividend to be four per cent, that is, at the rate of eight per cent per annum, the same which it had been for some years; but, at the same time, he admitted, that there might appear reason, when the state of the company's affairs should be more fully known, for reducing it in future. Upon this ground, he moved for leave to bring in a bill to empower the East India company to make a dividend on the 5th of July. No opposition was made to the introduction of the bill, although it was universally felt to be a case of great aukwardness; as either no dividend must take place, which would be inconvenient to individual proprietors, and might be injurious

CHAP. V. 1784.

to the credit of the company, or the house must authorize a certain dividend, without knowing that it was warranted by the state of the company's affairs. Mr. Fox, Mr. Eden, and Mr. Anstruther, allowed the propriety of authorizing some dividend, but objected to four per cent, and contended, that it should be only three per cent. Mr. Pitt replied, that to reduce the dividend from what it had been of late years, would be to pass judgment upon the affairs of the company, before the report was examined; and he farther urged, that the difference between three and four per cent for one half year, was of very little consequence in the general concerns of the company, when compared with the mischief, both public and private, which might arise from a diminution of the dividend. Mr. Pitt's proposal of four per cent was adopted; and the bill went through all its stages in the house of commons, on that and the following day, without any division; and it passed the house of lords in two days also, on the latter of which there was a division of 28 to 9 in its favor.

Very different and even opposite sentiments were entertained, at this time, upon the affairs of the East India company. Some persons represented the company as upon the verge of bankruptcy and ruin, and the stockholders as in danger of losing a large proportion of their capital: others, on the contrary, maintained, that if the whole property of the company were disposed of, and all their debts discharged, there would be a considerable surplus. Some thought, that the concerns of the company were utterly irretrievable by any interposition of government; while others asserted, that a moderate and temporary assistance would be sufficient to restore them to a flourishing

condition. Mr. Pitt, after a general and impartial consideration of the various statements which had been submitted to the house, as well in reports as in speeches, and the most diligent inquiry he had been able to make, was decidedly of opinion, that the company might fairly be said to be solvent; and that their present embarrassments were by no means such, as to preclude all hope of future affluence and prosperity. Through the gloom, which now hung over the company, he saw, at no great distance, a brighter prospect opening, in the continuance of peace, in the increase of trade, and in economical retrenchments, both at home and abroad; and revolving, in his penetrating and comprehensive mind, the immense extent and value of the British possessions in the east, he was convinced, not only that the company, though now laboring under an accumulated load of evils and distresses, and calling aloud upon the country for support and relief, might, by timely interference, be rescued from impending destruction; but also, that by proper management, India might be made the source of infinite benefit to the empire at large.

Under this impression, he determined in favor of granting the company the requisite assistance; and accordingly, printed copies of the report of the committee being delivered on the 28th of June, he submitted, on the 2d of July, the substance of a bill for that purpose, which included three points.

In the first place, Mr. Pitt proposed, that the payment of one half of the debt, due from the company to the public, for custom-house duties, should be postponed to the middle, and of the other half, to the end of the following year, which was, in fact, a longer respite than the directors themselves

thought necessary. The whole of this debt amounted to nearly a million.

It has been already noticed, that by the regulation act of 1773, the company could not accept bills drawn in India, above 300,000 *l.* Bills to a much larger amount had already reached England, and others were expected, which there was reasonable ground to believe the company would be in circumstances to pay at the time they became due; but if in the mean while they remained unaccepted, they would not be negotiable, and the credit of the company would suffer, which induced Mr. Pitt to propose, secondly, that the directors should be authorized to accept these bills.

Besides relief upon these two points, Mr. Pitt thought it would be useful to fix the dividend upon East India stock at a certain sum, and not to leave it, as it now was, liable to variation. At first he intended to confine the dividend to six per cent, till the debts of the company should be discharged; but finding, that above one-fourth of the whole East India stock was in the hands of foreigners, and that there was great danger, if any diminution should be made in the dividend, that they would take the alarm, and immediately dispose of their stock, which must have the effect of depressing its value, he proposed that the dividend should be eight per cent in future. Mr. Pitt said, that the sanction of parliament to this dividend, would be of material service to the company's credit; and he assured the house, of his firm persuasion, that if peace continued in India, of which there was a fair probability, and proper economy should be observed in the establishments of the different presidencies, which it was the intention of govern-

ment, to use all means of enforcing, the company would be enabled to fulfil all its engagements; more especially, as he had reason to hope, that the trade to China, already its most lucrative concern, would be encreased and rendered still more profitable, by regulations and measures now before the house, or which he had in contemplation. He recommended the adoption of these provisions in favor of the company; upon the ground of sound policy and general expediency, not doubting but the public would, in various ways, hereafter receive ample remuneration for their present indulgence.

Some objections, however, were made to this bill: Mr. Dempster saw no reason why the payment of the custom-house duties should be postponed, to the injury of the national revenue; and moved, that the company should pay an interest of five per cent on the money due. Mr. Pitt admitted, that in strictness the company ought to pay such an interest; but to require this, he said, would be to destroy almost the whole of the favor; and as the interests of the company, and of the public, were closely connected, and as he flattered himself that great resources might still be derived from India, he did not think it adviseable to charge the company five per cent upon their debt; preferring to relieve them handsomely and liberally, by remitting the interest. Mr. Dempster's motion was negatived in the committee, by a majority of 81 to 3, and by 85 to 27 upon the report.

. In discussing the bill, it was asked, whether, in case the East India company should not have it in their power to discharge the bills drawn upon them, parliament, having authorized their acceptance, would be bound to pay them?

CHAP. V. 1784.

To this, Mr. Pitt answered, certainly not; and Mr. Fox acknowledged, that parliament would be under no legal obligation; but he thought, that the public would be bound in honor and equity to pay them, if the company failed to do so. This Mr. Pitt would not admit; contending, that parliament, by authorizing the acceptance of these bills, only expressed an opinion, that the company would be able, in due time, to discharge them, but did not make itself responsible for their payment, any more than it took upon itself the responsibility of payment, when it authorized any other public or trading company to enter into a pecuniary engagement. This was frequently done; and the only obligation upon parliament, in such cases, was, to take care that there was just ground for the transaction, and that it did not make itself an accomplice in any error or deception. The public were in no way affected by the authority about to be given to the East India company; for, what was it, but an authority to make use of their own property and credit? In support of Mr. Pitt's opinion, Mr. Dundas referred to the cause of the restriction. By the act of 1773, the proprietors were, he said, permitted to divide eight per cent per annum, when the aggregate profits of the company amounted to that sum; and when they exceeded it, the public were to have three-fourths of the surplus; in order to secure which participation to the public, the directors were restrained from accepting bills, drawn in India, beyond a limited amount, lest by a fraudulent or improper acceptance, they should deprive the public of their right: this being the original ground of the restriction, the legislature, by removing it, would only give up, on the part of the public, their security

for a share of these contingent surplus profits, without incurring any obligation, or giving any pledge, directly or indirectly, respecting the payment of the bills. Mr. Fox would not allow the force of this reasoning; but it appeared to be so generally satisfactory, that he did not venture to divide the house.

It was also contended, that the different parts of the bill could not be reconciled with each other: the necessity of respiting the payment of the duties, proved the company to be in distress; and the permission to divide eight per cent, implied that it was affluent. This objection, which was more plausible than solid, was urged with considerable warmth and eagerness in both houses, but no division took place upon it in either. In truth, the bill rested upon this twofold principle, that the pecuniary embarrassment of the company, which was admitted on all sides, was merely temporary, arising chiefly out of the great expences of the war, now at an end; and that there was just ground for believing, that within a short period it would be in a flourishing condition. There was, therefore, no real inconsistency in the different provisions of the bill, which were adapted to the actual present distress, and to the probable future prosperity, of the company.

The bill passed; and in the course of the debates which took place in its progress through the house of commons, Mr. Pitt was called "a bold statesman;" but it was allowed, that his intrepidity was suited to the difficulties of the times; and we shall hereafter see, that the hopes and expectations, which induced him to afford this relief to the East India company, with some inconvenience and perhaps risque to the public, were well founded.

CHAP. V. 1784.

Mr. Pitt, having by these two bills extricated the East India company from its present difficulties, and re-established its sinking credit, had still to encounter the more arduous business of providing for the permanent regulation and future government of its various and extensive affairs. The mixed concerns of policy, commerce, and revenue, the blended interests of the company, and of the empire at large, the vast distance of India, and the consequent delay in communicating information, and conveying orders, the great temptations to misconduct in those rich and remote regions, the effect which the patronage of such immense territories might have upon the liberties of this country—these, and many other inferior considerations, all conspired to render it a task of extreme difficulty, to digest a plan, which should confirm and enlarge the advantages derived to Great Britain from its connection with India, protect the native inhabitants from acts of injustice and oppression, and at the same time preserve inviolate the principles and spirit of our own constitution. It was impossible, as has already been observed, to correct the abuses, which were acknowledged to exist in India, and to be of a most alarming nature, without some departure from the charter of the company: if there were to be no interference with its present authorities and privileges, the evils must continue, and the loss of India must follow.

In explaining the substance of the bill, which he was about to introduce, Mr. Pitt said, he was aware, that every measure, which could be devised for the government of India, must be imperfect, and liable to objections; and he could only submit to the house, what appeared to him, after the maturest delibe-

ration, best calculated to answer the important purposes in question, and not endanger the blessings at present enjoyed by the subjects of this kingdom. He wished not to interfere with the commerce of the company; and in what he had to propose respecting its other concerns, it would be his endeavor, not so much to create a new system, as to improve upon that which was already established. By supplying what was deficient, correcting what was amiss, and invigorating what was ineffective, he hoped to be able, in no small degree, to consult the general interest of the public, and to lay the foundation of future prosperity to the company, and of happiness to the natives, without violating the property of individuals, annihilating the chartered rights of any body of men, or departing from those maxims of government, which had for ages proved the uninterrupted source of freedom and security to Englishmen. He admitted, that no charter ought to be suffered to stand in the way of a reform, which the existence or welfare of the country demanded; but at the same time he contended, that a charter ought never to be infringed, except when the public safety called for an alteration. Charters were sacred things: on them depended private property and public franchises; and wantonly to invade them would be to unhinge the constitution, and throw the state into anarchy and confusion. The situation of the East India company was not such as to justify a revocation of their charter; but it was such as absolutely required both a change in the management of their affairs at home, and in the government of their possessions abroad. In attempting to remedy existing evils, he should confine himself within the limits of the actual necessity,

and not make it a pretence for gratifying private ambition, or subverting long established rights. It was impossible to accomplish the objects in view, without giving to some body of men an accession of power; but he would give no more than would be sufficient, and he would place it where it would be least liable to abuse.

The institution, which was to produce the necessary reform, must either be permanent and independent of the executive government of the country, or connected with and subordinate to it. A permanent and independent institution would be inconsistent with the constitutional prerogative of the king, and might lead to very mischievous consequences. If hostile to the administration of the day, the ministers might not only be ignorant of what was passing in the East Indies, but a different system might be pursued in India, and in the other parts of the empire. Were one permanent board or commission established, independent of the executive government, it was impossible to say, to what extent the precedent might be carried, or how often it might be multiplied. All the different branches of the public service might be separated and torn from the crown; and put, one after another, into so many independent and unconnected commissions. These considerations were sufficient to prove the impropriety of any permanent institution; and therefore he determined to propose, that the appointment and removal of persons to be entrusted with new powers for the government of India, should be vested in the king, upon whom all the various departments of executive government had a natural and legitimate dependance.

He was satisfied that the patronage, inseparable from the

possession of these immense territories, might be placed with greater safety in the directors, than in any set of political men; and he thought, that as small a part as possible should be retained in England, the remainder being intrusted to the company's superior servants in India, where executive powers, to a large extent, must unavoidably be lodged; but even there he should subject it to regulations and restrictions. The government in India ought to be so constituted, as to be active and vigorous, but at the same time not at liberty to pursue schemes of conquest and aggrandizement. Care should be taken to secure obedience to the general system of measures dictated from England, with a discretionary authority to act as any sudden event or emergency might appear to render expedient; but always under a strict obligation to explain and account for every part of their conduct. Lastly, it was indispensable to provide some more effectual mode for punishing wilful disobedience, and every species of delinquency, in India, than at present existed.

Upon these general principles, Mr. Pitt formed his India bill, which we may consider under three separate heads—A new establishment at home, with powers extending over the general concerns of the company—regulations to be applied in India—and the erection of a court in England, for the trial of offences committed in India.

With respect to the new establishment at home, Mr. Pitt proposed to place all the civil and military affairs, and the revenues of the East India company, and the government of their territorial possessions, under the control and superintendance of a board of commissioners to be appointed by his majesty,

CHAP. V. 1784.

consisting of six privy counsellors, of whom one of the secretaries of state, and the chancellor of the exchequer, were to be two; and the other four were to be persons who should hold offices of considerable emolument under government, to which little or no employment belonged, and who would therefore have leisure, and might be expected, to discharge the duties of their new situation, without any remuneration for that trouble. The secretary of state was to be president of this board, and, in his absence, the chancellor of the exchequer; but it being impossible, that either of those ministers should be able to attend constantly, though they might be present when points of great importance were discussed, the senior of the other four privy counsellors, was, in the absence of the secretary of state and the chancellor of the exchequer, to be president, and it was intended that he should take the active part in the general business of the board. If the members present should be equally divided upon any question, the president was to have a casting vote. This board of control was to have access to all papers and muniments of the company, and to be furnished with such extracts or copies of them, as they might from time to time desire. To this board the directors were to communicate copies of all proceedings, both of their own court and of the court of proprietors, relative to the civil, military, and financial affairs of the company, copies of all dispatches from their servants in India, and also of all dispatches proposed to be sent by them to India. These intended dispatches the board was to return to the directors within fourteen days, with the written approbation of three commissioners, or their reasons for disapproving them, together with instructions for alterations, if necessary,

and the directors were to send to India the dispatches so approved or amended; the court of proprietors was not to have the power of rescinding or altering any resolution or act of the directors, after it was approved by the board. The board was also to have power to require the directors to prepare dispatches upon any proposed subject, and if such dispatches should not be sent within fourteen days to the commissioners for their revisal, the board might itself draw up the dispatches, and order the directors to send them to India; and in any case where secresy was necessary, the board might send its orders to a committee of three directors, to be appointed by the court of directors for that purpose, who were to transmit them to India, without disclosing the substance of them, and the answers were to be sent to the secret committee of directors, by whom they were to be communicated to the board of control. These powers were not to extend to the commercial affairs of the company; and if at any time the commissioners should send orders or instructions to the directors to be transmitted to India, in the opinion of the latter not authorized by this bill, they might appeal to the king in council, whose decision was to be final. Similar powers had been given to the secretaries of state, by former acts of parliament; but they had never, or at least very rarely, been exercised, these great officers having been too much occupied by the immediate duties of their station. But this was to be an active, efficient, responsible board, whose positive concurrence, expressed by the signature of its members, was to be essential to every dispatch sent to India. This board was not, however, to have the appointment of a single servant of the company in Europe or in Asia. It was

CHAP. V. 1784.

to be, strictly speaking, a board of control and superintendance, interfering upon points only, of which his majesty's ministers, and privy counsellors might be supposed to be more competent judges than a company of merchants, however respectable and intelligent in the concerns of trade, the sole purpose for which their charter was originally granted, and which were still to remain under their exclusive management. Thus did Mr. Pitt equally avoid the inefficient character of lord North's plan, and the unconstitutional one of Mr. Fox's bill, by appointing a board, expressly devoted to Indian affairs, furnished with all the means of information, and with every requisite power, without whose actual consent, the directors could not take a single step, relative to the company's revenues or territories, but at the same time dependent upon the executive government of the country, and incapable of political influence, its members possessing neither emolument nor patronage.

The following were the regulations to be applied in India. Mr. Pitt proposed, that the government in each of the three presidencies, should consist of a president and three counsellors; that the governor general of India should be president of the government in Bengal; and that the commander in chief of all the company's forces in India, should be one of the council, and next in rank to the governor general; that the commander in chief at Madras and Bombay, should be members of the council in those presidencies, next in rank to the respective governors; but if the commander in chief of all the forces in India should at any time be at Madras or Bombay, he should be a member of the council there, and the commander in chief of the presidency should in that case continue

to have a seat in the council, but have no vote; if the members of the council present in any of the presidencies, should be equally divided upon any question, the governor or president should have a casting vote; and with a view of producing an unity of system in the different parts of our extensive Indian territories, the supreme government in Bengal was to have an effectual control over the other presidencies; the governors and councils of which were to be required to obey all orders they might receive from the government in Bengal, unless they were contrary to orders which they had previously received from the directors, and of which the government in Bengal was ignorant; and in case of disobedience, they were to be liable to suspension. The appointment of the governors, of the commanders in chief, and of the other members of the council, was to be in the directors; but either the king, or the court of directors, might recal the governor general, or any other person employed by the company. If the directors should omit to fill up any vacancy which might take place in the council, for two months after it was regularly notified to them, the king might appoint to such vacancy, and the person so appointed was not to be liable to recal by the directors. All other appointments were to be in the governments of the respective presidencies; and to prevent any corrupt or improper use of this patronage, it was to be provided, that all promotions in India, both civil and military, beneath the degree of members of the councils, should be made according to seniority, in a regular progressive succession, unless for some very urgent cause; in which case, the reasons for such deviation from this general rule, were to be entered at length upon the

minutes of the council, and copies of these entries transmitted by the first opportunity to the directors, for their confirmation or repeal of the appointment. The governors and councils were to be empowered to apprehend all persons, in their respective presidencies, suspected of carrying on illicit correspondence, and to bring them to trial in India, or to send them to England. To prevent all ambitious projects for the extension of dominion, the governor and council of Bengal were not to be permitted, without the express command of the directors, to enter into any offensive treaty, or to make war with any of the country powers, unless they should actually have committed hostilities, or have given evident proof of such intention, against the British nation in India, or against some country power dependent upon the company, or whose territories they were, by a subsisting treaty, bound to defend; and the governors and councils of the other presidencies were to be prohibited from commencing hostilities, or concluding any treaty whatever with the country powers, without express orders from the governor general and council, or from the directors, unless some imminent danger or sudden emergency should render it unsafe to postpone such hostilities or treaty; and every treaty so concluded, was, if possible, to contain a clause, subjecting it to the ratification or rejection of the governor general and council. The governors and councils of the other presidencies were to transmit to the governor general and council, copies of all their proceedings, and of all material occurrencies in their respective presidencies. Provision was to be made for the investigation of the claims of British subjects on the nabob of Arcot, and for

settling disputes between that prince and the rajah of Tanjore; and also for redressing, according to the respective circumstances of each particular case, all complaints of injustice and oppression from zemindars and other native landholders, who had been dispossessed of their lands, or subjected to exorbitant rents or heavy contributions; and in future, payments from tributary princes and renters of land were to be definite and moderate: all practicable retrenchments were to be made in the different establishments. The ages at which writers and cadets should be appointed, were to be regulated; and no greater number* was to be sent out than would be necessary to keep up the proper complement: the acceptance of presents from the natives was to be forbidden, under the penalty of forfeiture and punishment, as extortion: it was to be made a misdemeanor in the company's servants to disobey the orders or instructions of the directors, to neglect the duties of any trust or employment, or to make a corrupt bargain or contract relative to any office: no person removed from any situation by the sentence of a court of law, could be again employed by the company: all the servants of the company, who should return to England after the 1st of January 1787, were to be required, within two months after their arrival, to deliver upon oath to the court of exchequer, two copies of an inventory of

* A regulation upon this subject was very necessary. In a letter to the directors, written from India in 1782, Mr. Hastings said, that "he had about him at that time 250 persons, the younger sons of the first families in Britain, all gaping for lacks, and scrambling for patronage." Notwithstanding this remonstrance, 36 new writers were sent out in 1783, when sir Henry Fletcher, who was to have been one of Mr. Fox's commissioners, was chairman of the company.

CHAP. V. 1784.

all their property, specifying what part was not acquired in India; one of which was to be kept in the exchequer, and the other sent to the India-house; and the board of control, the court of directors, or any ten proprietors possessing conjunctively stock to the amount of 10,000 *l.* might, at any time within three years, make a complaint to the court of exchequer, that such inventory was incorrect; and the court was to be authorized to examine the party accused upon oath, and to take other means for ascertaining the truth; and if any one should omit to deliver these inventories, refuse to answer the interrogatories of the court of exchequer, or be found guilty of any concealment or misrepresentation to the amount of 2,000 *l.* his whole property was to be forfeited.

The last part of the bill related to the erection of a court of judicature in England, for the trial of offences committed in India. It was proposed, that any person might move the court of king's bench against any servant of the company, within three years after his return from India, or his delivery of the inventory of his property; and the court was to decide, whether there was sufficient ground for granting an information. In case of its being granted, the court was to have power, if it should appear necessary, to issue commissions to the courts of justice in India, for the purpose of taking depositions, and of collecting such information upon the spot, as might best serve to throw light upon the subject-matter of accusation. These depositions and information, properly authenticated, together with such other written documents, as might be furnished by the directors, from their dispatches to and from India, or from any other source, were to be admitted as evidence. After the

whole of this evidence should be procured, the court was to be formed for the trial of the accused person, and was to consist of three judges, one to be nominated by each of the three courts in Westminster-hall, four peers, and six members of the house of commons, to be chosen in the manner to be described in the bill: This court, of which no person holding any office under the crown during pleasure, or who had ever been in the service of the East India company, could be a member, was to be judge both of the law and of the fact, without the intervention of a jury: it might inflict the punishment of fine and imprisonment, and pronounce the person convicted incapable of serving the company again; and from its sentence there was to be no appeal.

This bill gave rise to several debates; and objections were urged against it with great warmth and personality.

It was asserted, that the division of power between the board of commissioners and the court of directors, would render the government of India weak and inefficient: but it was replied, that this was not a necessary consequence of a divided power, since, in the English constitution, the supreme power is divided into three branches, designed to be a control upon each other, and producing the happiest and most perfect form of political government known in antient or modern times.

Mr. Fox insisted, that this bill was as much a violation of the East India charter as his own; but, in reality, there was in this, as well as in other respects, a wide difference between the two bills. Mr. Pitt's bill left the commerce in the hands of the company: Mr. Fox's took it entirely away. Mr. Pitt's bill left the directors and their servants in possession of the whole

patronage: Mr. Fox's bill abolished the court of directors, and deprived the company of every appointment, civil, military, and commercial, both at home and in India; vesting the whole patronage in the commissioners. Mr. Pitt's bill was, of necessity, a partial deviation from the company's charter; making such changes only as the present critical situation of their affairs, and the public interest, absolutely demanded: Mr. Fox's bill, going far beyond any actual necessity, was a total abrogation of all their rights, and a violent confiscation of all their property. Mr. Pitt's bill secured to the constitutional executive power of these realms, the superintendance over the whole empire, by giving to the crown the same sway over its Indian, which it had over its other dependencies, and by ensuring to it a regular, systematic, and supreme control over all the political affairs of those immense territories: Mr. Fox's bill erected an imperium in imperio, the commissioners of his board not having any dependance upon, or communication with, his majesty's ministers, and possessing an influence of the most dangerous nature to the established authorities, with the means of involving this country in war with any of the European states connected with India, without even the knowledge of his majesty's government. These fundamental and essential differences between the two bills, were so palpable, and so important, that they were very generally felt and acknowledged, both in parliament and in the country.

The compelling all persons to swear to the value of their property, upon their return from India, was represented as harsh and rigorous; but in defence of that provision, it was said, that there was no other effectual mode of putting an end to the

peculation and extortion, which had so long prevailed in India: and, as a further defence, it was urged, that as this oath was not to be required till 1787, those who were already in India, and might be affected by it retrospectively, would have an opportunity of avoiding its operation, by returning to England before that time; and those who should go out subsequently to the passing of this act, would know to what test they would be subject, when they returned.

It was contended, by the enemies of the bill, that the provisions relative to the zemindars, to the debts of the nabob of Arcot, and to the acceptance of presents, would not answer their intended purposes: But it was replied, that the proposed regulations upon these points, were the best which the respective cases admitted; and that every exertion would be used to give them effect.

The new court of judicature was strongly objected to, especially as not allowing Indian delinquents a trial by a jury of their peers, which was represented as the birthright of every Englishman. To which it was answered, that many persons in this country are convicted and punished without a jury, particularly that numerous and valuable set of men, the officers and privates of our army and navy. As the ordinary law of England was not suited to the enforcement of military discipline, so it had been found inadequate to the prevention of the grossest misconduct in India: the same principle, of public utility and general expediency, would therefore equally justify another mode of trial in both cases. The courts of Westminster Hall, and even the power of parliament, had been proved, by experience, to be incompetent to the punishment of offences

committed in the distant regions of the east, which rendered it necessary to have recourse to a new species of judicature, not confined to the common rules of evidence; and when it was considered, from what classes of life the members of the proposed court were to be taken, and that every possible precaution was to be used for excluding from the office of judge, all persons who could be supposed to have any bias upon their minds, it might safely be said, that no assemblage of persons could be found better qualified to investigate truth, or more likely to decide with candor and justice.

The chief debate upon the principle of this bill, took place on the day fixed for its going into a committee, when the motion for the speaker's leaving the chair, was opposed, but at length carried, at a very late hour, by a majority of 271, to 60. Upon communicating to his majesty, the result of this debate, Mr. Pitt received the following answer:

"It is with infinite pleasure I have received Mr. Pitt's note, containing the agreeable account of the committee on the East India bill having been opened by the division of so very decided a majority. I trust this will prevent much trouble being given in its farther progress, and that this measure may lay a foundation for, by degrees, correcting those shocking enormities in India, which disgrace human nature; and if not put a stop to, threaten the expulsion of the company out of that wealthy region. I have the more confidence of success, from knowing Mr. Pitt's good sense, which will make him not expect, that the present experiment shall at once prove perfect; but that by an attentive eye, and an inclination to do only what is right, he

will, as occasions arise, be willing to make such improvements as may, by degrees, bring this arduous work to some degree of perfection."

The large majority upon this occasion prevented any other division in the house of commons, except two, upon clauses in the committee, in which the numbers were very small *, and both in favor of Mr. Pitt. The only division in the house of lords, was upon a motion of lord Carlisle's, in a very thin house, for altering the day fixed for the second reading, in which ministers prevailed, by a majority of 11 to 4.

BESIDES these bills, which were brought forward by Mr. Pitt himself, there was a variety of other business in the present session, in which he took a leading part.

The first subject to be mentioned, is the Westminster election, some proceedings in which have been already related; and which is deserving of farther notice, as it involved a question respecting the constitutional rights of the house of commons.

Mr. Lee having failed in the resolution, which he moved on the 24th of May, for censuring the conduct of the high bailiff, in granting a scrutiny, Mr. Fox, on the following day, presented a petition from himself to the house of commons, praying, that the house would order the high bailiff to make "a proper and perfect return" for the city of Westminster, meaning, as he said, that the petition should be referred to a committee

* Ninety-two, and seven, on one of these clauses; and one hundred and ten, and thirty-nine, on the other.

CHAP. V. 1784.

under Mr. Grenville's act. To this, Mr. Pitt, among others, objected, as that act was applicable to sitting members only, and no persons had been returned for Westminster. Mr. Fox admitted, that the petition did not come within the letter of the act, and, after a short debate, it was withdrawn. In a subsequent part of the day, it was presented again, for the purpose of the petitioner being heard by his counsel, at the bar of the house: it was then received, and an order made accordingly. On the 31st, a petition was presented from certain electors of Westminster, to the same effect as that from Mr. Fox; and two days afterwards, a petition of an opposite nature was presented from certain other electors, praying, that the scrutiny, granted by the high bailiff, might be allowed to proceed, as being the only means of ascertaining, which of the candidates had a majority of legal votes. The hearing of counsel, and examination of witnesses upon these several petitions, occupied four days *, upon every one of which the house sat very late; and on the 8th of June, a motion was made to direct the high bailiff to make an immediate return of members to serve for the city of Westminster. This motion occasioned a very long and warm debate; and it was evident that Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox waited, as they frequently did, to reply to each other. At length Mr. Fox rose, and made a most intemperate and violent speech. I shall transcribe Mr. Pitt's answer, as it displays great spirit, eloquence, and power of reasoning, and gives a very clear idea of a question, which excited considerable interest at the time.

"Sir, if the right honorable gentleman's reason for being

* There were two divisions, both in favor of government, one of 212 to 77, and the other of 180 to 81.

so desirous of securing to himself the last hearing in this debate, has been, in order that his mad and violent assertions might pass without opportunity of being contradicted, I must acknowledge, indeed, the prudence and policy of his conduct in endeavoring to prevent a reply; but I must rejoice, however, when charges are brought against administration, as gross as they are unfounded, that I have the opportunity of rising to refute the accusations, to contradict the assertions, to defy that right honorable gentleman to proof, and to affirm, with equal hardiness, and I trust, with more than equal truth, that, in no respect, has administration exercised any undue influence—in no respect have they been so profligate as to furnish those means which have been hinted at—in no instances have they suborned witnesses to swear away men's lives—in no respect whatever have they been accessary to those violences, murders, perjuries, and that black catalogue of offences, which the right honorable gentleman calls up, by way of auxiliary matter, to embellish his speech, and to assist the house in the decision of that grave, dry, constitutional question, which is all we have this night to determine. Sir, if the right honorable gentleman has his charge to bring forward, the courts of this country are open to him: I hope, and trust, administration is not so strong as to be able to resist any just accusation, that he can bring against them. I hope, on the other hand, administration is not so weak, as to give way and yield to vehement assertions, utterly unsupported, and evidently malicious: I should have hoped, opposition was not so strong, that no faction in this country could have been so strong, so bold, so mad with desperation and disappointment, as to throw

out great and criminal charges against administration, without having either the intention, or the means, or the shadow of any means, to support the accusations which they venture so roundly to make.

I am not surprised, indeed, that the right honorable gentleman should attempt to represent himself as the marked object of ministerial persecution. With respect, sir, to the very cruel hardship, that he has just complained of, namely, that he has not been allowed to have the last word in the debate, I would only beg leave to remind both him and the house, that so far from having, from his present situation, an indisputable right to the last word, it is contrary, I believe, to a standing order of your house, that he is allowed to speak at all, or even to be present in the house; for one of your standing orders says, " that if any thing shall come in question touching the return or election of any member, he is to withdraw during the time the matter is in debate." Such, then, is the cruel persecution carrying on against the right honorable gentleman, that instead of being forced to be silent, and to withdraw, he is allowed to speak often ten times a day on the same question; sometimes, sir, for three hours at a time, filling his speech with every thing that is personal, invidious, and inflammatory. I say, nevertheless, I am not surprised, if he should pretend to be the butt of ministerial persecution, and if, by striving to excite the public compassion, he should seek to reinstate himself in that popularity, which he once enjoyed, but which he so unhappily has forfeited. For it is the best and most ordinary resource of these political apostates, to court and to offer themselves to perse-

cution, for the sake of the popular predilection and pity, which usually fall upon persecuted men; it becomes worth their while to suffer, for a time, political martyrdom, for the sake of the canonization that awaits the suffering martyr; and I make no doubt, the right honorable gentleman has so much penetration, and at the same time so much passive virtue about him, that he would be glad, not only to seem a poor, injured, persecuted man, but that he would gladly seek an opportunity of really suffering a little persecution, if it be possible to find such opportunity.

"Upon the same ground, sir, it would unquestionably be my interest, and no less, I am sure, my wish, to abstain from every thing, that has even the appearance of persecution, much more that is in reality persecution; but yet, when great constitutional questions are involved, it then becomes a minister to forego every other consideration, and so far, perhaps, to gratify his adversary, as to furnish him with the pretence of being the object of ministerial persecution; steadfastly determining, at all hazards, and contrary, perhaps, to his own convenience, to maintain the true spirit of the constitution.

"I wish to meet the right honorable gentleman on the two grounds which he has laid down, and to decide upon the issue of them: First, the propriety and expediency of granting a scrutiny; and, secondly, the legality of it, under all the circumstances of the case. And here, sir, let me first touch a little on the hardship which the right honorable gentleman is said to labor under. Now I do insist, that if his single object be (as he says it is) to bring the dispute to the decision of Mr. Grenville's committee, a scrutiny will not delay that decision

CHAP. V. 1784.

one moment; nay, it will even forward it: for, suppose the return, according to the motion before the house, to be made immediately, still the petition before Mr. Grenville's committee could not be gone through this year; it must, therefore, begin again, de novo, in the next session, the latter end of which would arrive before the question could be decided. On the other hand, if a scrutiny be now instituted preparatory to the petition, it will be finished, in all human probability, before the beginning of the next session; and the petitioner, whoever he may be, will come prepared, having his business cut short by these means, so that the petition must be finally decided in the early part of the next session; or, perhaps, the consequence of a scrutiny may be, that there will come no petition at all.

"But the right honorable gentleman wishes even that there might be a new writ, and a new election, rather than a scrutiny. Now, let us see how this would expedite the business. Why, sir, if a new writ were issued while the parliament is sitting, as this would be, all sides are agreed, that the bailiff would have a perfect right to prosecute a scrutiny, whenever the poll is over; it being universally allowed, that scrutinies are lawful, in the case of elections, during the sitting of parliament. If you grant, therefore, the right honorable gentleman this curious wish of his, the consequence will simply be, that after another forty days' poll, forty days' riot, and forty days' confusion, he will find himself just where he is at this moment, except, indeed, that he will then be constrained to own (from the precedent of Vandeput and Trentham, which will become precisely in point,) that the high bailiff, if he pleases, will then have an undoubted right to go on with the scrutiny.

" Now, to say the truth, the arguments of the right honorable gentleman, if they prove any thing, must necessarily prove what I have just stated, namely, that there must be a new writ; for he tells you, that, after the 18th of May, the bailiff became functus officio; that all the virtue of his writ expired, and that the high bailiff, after that day, was no longer, in this respect, high bailiff, but was turned into a private person, and had no more right to institute a scrutiny than any one of us; and yet, sir, by the resolution before you, this bailiff is ordered to do an act, which no bailiff, functus officio, can possibly do; namely, to return the writ. The hand you order to sign the writ, is a dead man's hand. Why surely, sir, if the bailiff, ever since the 18th of May, has been like one of ourselves, you may as well order one of us to make the return, as order the high bailiff to do it. So far, therefore, as the hardship of the case is considered, it is clear, that to let the scrutiny proceed, is a mitigation of trouble and expence; since a new writ is the consequence of the honorable gentleman's argument, and a new writ, as I said before, would, forty days hence, exactly bring us to that point where we are now arrived.

" I must beg the house, then, to consider coolly and distinctly, what the motion before you tends to: it does not, indeed, command the high bailiff to return lord Hood and Mr. Fox, as the honorable gentleman first intended, and as his petition prayed; that is now found out to be too monstrous, as it would be no less than to make this house the electors of its own members; usurping at once the office of returning officer and the right of electing the representatives of the people. That ground, I say, sir, is shifted: and to what does the resolution

now go? It orders the high bailiff to return two members; it orders this deceased returning officer back again to life, in order to make a return of the writ; this officer, I say, sir, whose existence irrevocably ceased on the 18th of May; for, on the single argument of his perfect nonentity since that day, rests the whole of that conclusion which is so earnestly contended for, that he is not in the capacity to prosecute the scrutiny. Now, sir, the resolution also orders the high bailiff to return those two candidates, who have, in his judgment, the majority of legal votes, though the bailiff told you yesterday, he could form no judgment, who had the legal majority, and though he explained, by substantial evidence, for what reasons it was impossible to form such judgment. Sir, I will not weary the house, with entering into all the detail of evidence; but I ask any man of honor, of candor, and of plain sense, whether the high bailiff of Westminster had not sufficient reason to wish for a scrutiny, in order to satisfy his own judgment and conscience, provided a scrutiny could be legally prosecuted, under all the circumstances of the case? The legality of it, is what I shall certainly have to prove. His evidence, in three words, was this:—that there have polled at this election, above 4,000 more men than there are legal votes in Westminster, upon any calculation that can be formed; that there have sometimes been 1,800 suffered to poll in a day, under the idea that the votes were to be revised at a scrutiny; that he has received information of many hundred bad votes for Mr. Fox, in two particular parishes; that he has had intelligence, sufficient certainly to warrant a suspicion, that bad practices had been used for the purpose of procuring a number of illegal votes;

and that he was terrified, by violent threats, into an admission of many votes extremely doubtful, which, however, he set down at the moment, with the determination to inquire into them afterwards: upon these grounds, let any man deny, if he can, the expediency and propriety of a scrutiny, provided it be lawful. We are told, indeed, of Mr. Grenville's committee, and that it is there alone an effectual scrutiny can be had: but, sir, the high bailiff is not to take Mr. Grenville's bill into his consideration; he is sworn to return those who have the majority of legal votes, according to his judgment; and he is bound, therefore, to do every thing that is legal, in order sufficiently to inform his judgment. Besides, give me leave to say, the possession even of the seat ought not to depend on the very loose discretion of the returning officer. The law and the constitution consider it to be a matter of some moment, who shall be put to the trouble of petitioning; and it is expected of the returning officer, that he should give the intermediate possession of the seat to those candidates alone, who have pretty strong prima facie evidence of their right.

"With respect, sir, to the legality of the scrutiny, under all the present circumstances, which appears to me the hinge on which every thing is now to turn, I am certainly forced to acknowledge, that there exists no precedent precisely in point, though the case of Vandeput and Trentham, in this same city of Westminster, appears to me nearly in point as to the meaning and spirit of it; but there is certainly this accidental difference, that that was an election during the existence of parliament, the present is an election following a dissolution. What I mean, however, to prove, and what I say must be

CHAP. V. 1784. proved, (unless we issue a new writ) is this; that the high bailiff was not so completely functus officio on the 18th of May, but that, sufficient explanation having been given why he could not return the writ on the day when it was returnable, the law and the constitution do allow, that this house should leave the returning officer to prosecute and complete the election, which he has begun, without issuing a new writ.

"The case of Coventry has been quoted, in order to prove the returning officer, functus officio; but I deny that this is a case in point. There, the election was interrupted by riots, the poll books destroyed, and the returning officer therefore made (as in the present case,) a special return, certifying to the house, the reasons why he could not return two members; whereupon the house issued a new writ. But, sir, between that case and the present, there is a striking difference. Here the bailiff reports to us, that the election is begun, but is not yet complete, for certain reasons. In the case of Coventry, the returning officer certified, that the whole election had been defeated; not that he had not had time to decide whom he should return, but that he had all to begin again, which rendered a new writ most undoubtedly proper. The act of parliament, in which gentlemen lay their great stress, and which the bailiff is said to have broken, is, as I understand, the 10th and 11th of king William; an act, as I must insist, applicable only to sheriffs, who were grown at that time extremely negligent in forwarding their writs, which are the aggregate of the precepts, received by them, for the several returning officers within their respective counties. It applies to sheriffs, merely as executive, not as judicial officers, enjoining

them to make up with diligence the precepts they had received, and to send them to the crown office within a limited time, under the penalty of 500 *l.*; a moiety of which is payable to the person suing for it. Now, sir, as the right honorable gentleman has confessed, upon better information, that he should stand no chance of recovering the penalty on a popular action, since he has declined this species of revenge upon the bailiff, which he at first threatened, he has saved me the trouble of contesting that question; and it is indisputably clear, that the present case can by no means come under that act. That act relates, I say, to the executive conduct of the sheriff; the present question respects the judicial conduct of the bailiff, who, in order to make up his judgment, has thought proper, under certain extraordinary circumstances, to institute a scrutiny. I am far from thinking, that a bailiff has any right to protract his election beyond the day when the writ is returnable, unless from very particular circumstances. The argument, therefore, that bailiffs, at this rate, may protract the meeting of parliament to what period they please, must fall entirely to the ground. The house must judge of his reasons, must hear them, must examine them; and if they are insufficient, must correct and punish him, if he be worthy of punishment: but if proof be given, that, owing to peculiar circumstances, it was impossible for him to fulfil his oath, and to judge who had the majority of legal votes, I say, then the law and the constitution permit, that he should prosecute what he has begun without a new writ, and take those measures, which are absolutely necessary to form his judgment.

" In order to examine more particularly what is the law of

CHAP. V. 1784.

the case, we can only ask ourselves, how it stands when similar circumstances occur in the execution of other writs. In the nature of writs, it is agreed, there is no difference. Let us examine, then, the analogy of law upon the subject, and I hope, sir, I shall not be thought pedantic, if I should allude somewhat technically to a profession, to which I once had the honor of belonging, in order to prove distinctly, what is the law upon this point. A very learned gentleman near me, (the master of the rolls) has told you, that in many instances the court allows an extension of time, in cases where some proceedings have been had upon the writ, but where every thing is not perfected by the day when the writ is returnable. Now, sir, to bring this point of law more directly into the cognizance of the house, I will state a case:—A writ is issued to the sheriff, (in an action of debt) called a capias ad satisfaciendum, ordering him to seize the goods of A, and this is followed by another, called a venditioni exponas, and is returnable by a certain day; the sheriff, in prosecution of his writ, seizes the goods, in order to put them up to sale. But we will suppose, that in taking these goods of A, as he is commanded by the writ, the sheriff, through mistake and confusion, lays hold of some goods of B, which are mixed with them, and he has not time to separate the goods of A, which are all he is authorized to take, and to put them up to sale before the writ is returnable. What does the sheriff do in this case? Why, sir, he reports the particular circumstances which prevent his returning the writ, to the court, and the court then allows him to go and examine into the goods, or, in other words, they grant a scrutiny upon the circumstances laid before them, not issuing any new writ, but allowing only

an extension of the old one. Now, sir, let the house alter the word sheriff to bailiff, and for dead goods read living, and this is the very case before you.

" But if this, which I have stated, be true; if it be law, if it be the fact in the courts below, arguing as I have a right to argue, upon the analogy of the law in every new case, I do implore the house to consider the absolute illegality of our interfering in the office of bailiff, and directing him either to return lord Hood and Mr. Fox, as was once desired of us, or the illegality even of forcing him to return any two members, before those measures are taken, which it is absolutely necessary to take, and which the law therefore enjoins him to take, in order to make his return.

" Some gentlemen have talked of the peculiar jealousy of our constituents, on matters of election; but, sir, their's has never been a jealousy lest this house should be supine in watching its own privileges. The jealousy of the people has always justly been, lest this house should assume privileges of electing members, or of directing their election, which is not for us to do. What was the case of the Middlesex election? Was it not that the house of commons determined, by their own authority, to impose on the people a representative, who was not the object of their choice? God forbid that this house should again impose on the people any man, who is not the object of their choice! Let elections without doors take their legal course. It is our office to punish corrupt or partial returning officers; it is our office to issue new writs; it is our office ultimately to decide election contests; but it is not within the scope of our privileges to direct the bailiffs whom

CHAP. V. 1784.

to return, or to order them, as if they were servants or officers of our's, to make returns in what manner, and at what time, we please. The right honorable gentleman, indeed, might, with some degree of consistency, propose to the house, the assumption of new privileges in matters of elections, for, in the case of the Middlesex election, we know that he was the champion of this house, against the rights of the people; and it is singular enough, that the only two points in which the right honorable gentleman and the noble lord (lord North) for a series of years agreed, were in the decision of the Middlesex election, which is now so deservedly execrated, and in their execration of Mr. Grenville's bill, which is now so deservedly applauded.

" Sir, it has been hinted to the house, that some new law to regulate Westminster elections will be proposed, and the right honorable gentleman, with a degree of ingenuity that is characteristic, immediately exclaims, that we find it necessary to introduce a new law, in order to prevent future parliaments from adopting the bad precedent we have set them. That a new law is wanted on the subject of elections in Westminster, is surely what nobody can deny; but my opinion is, that until a new law is introduced, it is better to decide according to the laws existing, than to anticipate new laws, or to pass the bounds of our privileges. I am aware of the difficulties we are all reduced to, in so unheard of a case as the present. For this house to order a bailiff whom to return, is impossible; neither is it possible for us to forbid him from doing that which is absolutely necessary to the forming a reasonable judgment upon a point, which is not contrary to law, and in which the

analogies of law, when the circumstances are compared, completely justify him."

A division took place, in which 117 voted for the question, and 195 against it. A motion was then made, directing the high bailiff to proceed in the scrutiny with all practicable dispatch, which, after a short debate, was carried by a majority of 178 to 90; and thus the legality of the scrutiny, for which Mr. Pitt so earnestly contended, was fully established. The house did not adjourn till after six o'clock next morning.

In the early part of the session, there were several conversations respecting the necessity of a reform in parliament, and Mr. Pitt was requested by Mr. Sawbridge, to bring the subject before the house of commons. But Mr. Pitt declared, that although he continued a decided friend to the measure, he had not leisure to attend to the arrangement of so complicated and important a business; and thinking the present an unfavorable time for discussing the question, he wished it to be deferred to the next session, when he pledged himself to bring it forward, and to give it every assistance in his power. Many other persons concurred in Mr. Pitt's wish, but Mr. Sawbridge would not consent to the postponement; and on the 16th of June, he moved for the appointment of a committee, "to inquire into the state of the representation of the commons of Great Britain in parliament." Mr. Pitt supported the motion, which was lost by a majority of 191 to 125.

The only remaining business of this session, of sufficient importance to be noticed, is a motion of Mr. Dundas, on the

CHAP. V. 1784.

2d of August, relative to the estates forfeited to the crown, in consequence of the rebellion in Scotland in 1745. A number of persons, he said, in that part of the united kingdom, had the misfortune to engage in that rebellion, and had paid the forfeit, some of their lives and fortunes, others of their fortunes only. It was then judged necessary, in order to strike a terror into that part of the nation, that its inhabitants should be put under a kind of proscription, and be thereby disqualified from serving the state in any capacity. He did not mean to give an opinion as to the policy or impolicy of such a measure; but so it was, that the highlanders continued proscribed till towards the close of the war immediately preceding the last. At that time they were called forth from their state of humiliation by an illustrious statesman, who, finding that the southern parts of the kingdom, exhausted of men by the war, could no longer furnish the necessary recruits for the fleets and armies, saw that the highlands of Scotland were able to supply great numbers of men; and resolved, like a man above the level of illiberal and unwise prejudices, to put an end to a proscription so injurious to the community at large. He raised regiments of highlanders, and sent them to fight the battles of their country in every quarter of the world. They served with fidelity; they fought with valor; and with their blood they purchased glory to themselves, and victory to Great Britain. The statesman, to whom he alluded, was the late earl of Chatham, whose expressions respecting that transaction he had now on paper in his hand, and would read them to the house, as infinitely better adapted to the subject, than any thing he could say. "I am above all local prejudices," said that great man, "and care not whether a man has been rocked in

a cradle on this, or on the other, side of the Tweed: I sought only for merit, and I found it in the mountains of the north. I there found a hardy race of men, able to do their country service, but laboring under a proscription. I called them forth to her aid, and sent them to fight her battles. They did not disappoint my expectations: for their fidelity could only be equalled by their valor, which signalized their own and their country's renown all over the world." Mr. Dundas, having read this extract, proceeded: It was an auspicious omen, he said, that the first blow had been given to this proscription, by the earl of Chatham, and might well justify a hope, that the remains of the system would be entirely annihilated under the administration of his son, who would thus complete the good work which his great father had begun. The conduct of the earl of Chatham, in taking off the proscription, under which the families, engaged in the late rebellion, had labored for a long time, afforded them an opportunity to atone for the crimes of their ancestors; and there was not one of all these families, in which some person had not spilt his blood in his country's cause; and he would be bold to assert, that all remains of that spirit which had rendered the inhabitants of the highlands disaffected to the present government, had long since disappeared; and that the king had not at this moment, a set of more loyal subjects in his dominions. It would be generous then in parliament, to forget the offences of the ancestors; it would be magnanimity to treat their worthy descendants like trusty and faithful subjects; and by a restoration of the estates, cancel even the remembrance of the acts, by which they had been forfeited. He proposed, that these

CHAP. V. 1784.

estates, on being restored, should descend to those heirs, whether male or female, to whom they would have gone in a regular and legal course of descent, in case no act of rebellion had been committed by their ancestors; subject, however, to the same charges, to which they were liable, when they fell into the hands of government. He represented this restoration as likely to have a very happy effect upon the minds of the tenantry of those estates, by bringing back to them their old landlords, to whom they might hereafter look for patronage and protection; and as peculiarly calculated to check that spirit of emigration, which had prevailed to a great degree, some years since, and seemed to be now reviving.

Both Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox expressed their warm approbation of this proposal, and the bill passed the house of commons with scarcely any opposition. In the house of peers, the lord chancellor complained that the bill was introduced at so late a period of the session; and though he desired to be considered as not delivering any opinion upon its principle, it was evident from his speech upon the second reading, that he was by no means favorable to the measure. Upon the third reading, he made a motion to postpone the business to the next session, which was negatived by a majority of 7 to 4; and the bill was passed.

On the 20th of August, his majesty put an end to the session by a speech from the throne, in which he returned thanks to the two houses, for their diligent and zealous attention to the public service; and especially, for the provision which they had made for the better government of India, and for the pro-

tection and improvement of the revenue; and he informed them, that many important objects, with respect to trade and commerce, would require their consideration after the recess.

THE ability and knowledge displayed by Mr. Pitt, in the course of this session, in which more important business was carried through parliament, than in any former period of the same length, completely put an end to the objections, which were before continually made to his youth and inexperience. No one now ventured to reproach him with engaging in an undertaking to which he was unequal; while all allowed, that no political man had ever such a weight to sustain. The superiority of his eloquence, and the energy and firmness of his mind, it had before been impossible to deny; and now it appeared, that his talents were of that practical nature, which enabled him to devise measures, suited to the public exigencies, and calculated to rescue the country from the pressing and complicated difficulties with which it was surrounded. He came prepared upon every subject, which admitted of previous consideration, and was never at a loss, when any question unexpectedly arose, or any objection was suddenly started by his adversaries. Though the whole business of the nation rested upon him, as the sole minister in the house of commons, it would be injustice not to mention, that he had a most able adviser and supporter in Mr. Dundas, who had been accustomed to take an active part in parliament during lord North's administration, and who now exerted his vigorous understanding and manly powers of debate, in a manner highly useful to Mr. Pitt. On him he could always rely as ready to argue

CHAP. V. 1784.

judiciously, and with effect, any point which might be brought into discussion; and the particular attention which Mr. Dundas had for many years given to the affairs of India, enabled him to render Mr. Pitt the most essential service, in arranging and carrying through parliament his plan for the future government of that important part of the British empire.

Mr. Pitt passed the remainder of the year in London and its immediate neighborhood, preparing and maturing the plans which he intended to submit to parliament in the ensuing session; and enjoying the satisfaction of learning, that his measures for the improvement of the revenue, were succeeding to the utmost of his expectation.

CHAPTER THE SIXTH:

1784.

Continental Affairs — Meeting of Parliament — Westminster Scrutiny — Finance Measures — Parliamentary Reform — Commercial Intercourse between Great Britain and Ireland — Prorogation of Parliament.

THE situation of affairs upon the continent was at this time such, that it would not be justifiable to pass them over entirely in silence; especially, as they were considered of sufficient interest to this country to be noticed in the speech from the throne, at the opening of the next session of parliament.

The emperor of Germany, taking advantage of the weak and disordered state to which Holland was reduced by the war with Great Britain, and by internal dissensions, demanded the cession of Maestricht and the contiguous territory, which were detached from the rest of the Dutch possessions; and urged, as sovereign of the Netherlands, a great variety of other claims in succession, the last and by far the most important of which was, the free navigation of the Scheldt: this would have been a fatal blow to the commerce and naval power of Holland, and might have endangered the independence and very existence of the republic. The emperor's immediate object was, to open the port of Antwerp, once the emporium of Europe, with the hope of restoring that city to some share, at least, of its former riches and splendor; and of acquiring to his dominions those

benefits which arise from foreign trade. The states general defended what they conceived to be their unquestionable rights, in moderate and conciliatory language, but, at the same time, with a becoming degree of firmness; and, in particular, they stated, that the exclusive navigation of the Scheldt had been secured to them by the treaty of Munster, in 1648, and confirmed by several subsequent treaties; that, in fact, it rested upon the same authority as the possession of the Netherlands, by the house of Austria, whose right to any part of the Low Countries would never have been acknowledged, if the sovereignty of the Scheldt had not been ceded to the United Provinces. The high and peremptory tone in which these claims were made and supported, and the little disposition manifested by the emperor, to pay any regard, either to existing treaties, to which his ancestors had been parties, or to long and uninterrupted enjoyment, excited great alarm throughout the territories of the states general. These were the natural effects of conscious superiority on the one side, and of utter incompetency on the other, to resist the demands of so powerful a claimant.

After numerous unavailing memorials and representations, the states general, still earnestly desirous of settling all points of difference, by an amicable adjustment, sent, in the month of April 1784, with the consent of the emperor, two plenipotentiaries to confer personally for that purpose, with his minister at the court of Brussells. But, on the very night of their arrival in that city, a detachment of Austrian soldiers, with four field pieces, seized the dismantled fort of Old Lillo, which was acknowledged to be situated within the Dutch limits;

and about a week afterwards, when the negotiations were actually commenced, another detachment of Austrian soldiers seized a second place, belonging to the states general, called Hartog Eyk, near Heerle, where they pulled down the Dutch flag from the custom-house, and, with severe threats, commanded the collector, in the name of the emperor of Germany, to exact no more toll or duty, and to obey no orders of the Dutch government, under whose authority he had hitherto acted.

Notwithstanding these open invasions of territorial right, the negotiations continued through the summer, but with a temper on the part of the Austrian ministers, which precluded all hope of accommodation. In the autumn, the emperor, who had not been able to prevail upon the Dutch to surrender their right to the exclusive navigation of the Scheldt, determined to make trial, whether they would venture to enforce it against his ships; and with that view, he prepared two brigs, one of which was to attempt to sail from Antwerp to the sea, and the other from the sea to Antwerp. He commanded the captains to submit, in the course of their respective voyages, to no detention or examination from any of the ships belonging to the states general, and in no manner whatever to acknowledge their authority at any of the custom-houses or forts upon the river; and he formally announced, that he should consider any insult or interruption offered to either of these vessels, as an act of hostility, and a declaration of war on the part of the republic of Holland. The brigs sailed early in October, and were stopped by armed cutters, in the service of the states general; and the captains of the brigs, in obedience to the emperor's orders, refusing to comply with what was required

CHAP. VI. 1785.

of them, the Dutch officers took possession of both. Information of these events was conveyed to the emperor, then in Hungary, who immediately ordered his ambassador to leave the Hague, and his minister at Brussells, to put an end to the negotiations. Both the emperor and the states general, wrote to the different courts in Europe, to explain and justify their respective proceedings; and they called upon those powers, with whom they were in alliance, to furnish the assistance stipulated by treaty. On the 7th of November, the garrisons of Lillo, Frederick Henry, and Cruikshanks, fearing a sudden attack from the Austrians, which they were not in a state to repel, cut their dykes, opened their sluices, and laid all the neighboring country, a considerable portion of which belonged to Austrians, under water; and in consequence of the alarm at first caused by this unexpected and mischievous measure, some shots were exchanged between the advanced posts of the Austrians and one of the Dutch garrisons. No farther act of hostility was committed; but preparations for war were made by both parties, with as much activity as the season of the year would permit; and there was reason to believe that other powers would be involved in the contest.

UNDER this expectation of approaching warfare in the immediate neighborhood of Great Britain, parliament met on the 25th of January 1785; and the king, in his speech from the throne, alluding to the circumstances which have been just related, informed the houses, that notwithstanding any appearance of differences upon the continent, he continued "uniformly to receive from all foreign powers, the strongest assurances of

their good disposition towards this country:" he mentioned the success which had attended the measures taken in the last session, for the suppression of smuggling, and for the improvement of the revenue, as an encouragement to parliament to apply itself with renewed assiduity to those important objects; he recommended to its consideration the adjustment of such points in the commercial intercourse between Great Britain and Ireland, as were not yet finally arranged; and such farther regulations as might appear to be necessary in the different offices in the kingdom, conformably to the suggestions in the reports of the commissioners of public accounts. The addresses were carried in both houses without any division. In the house of commons, Mr. Pitt was the only speaker on the side of government. He replied, in two speeches, to lord Surry, Mr. Burke, lord North, and Mr. Fox. Nothing material occured in the debate, except an acknowledgement from Mr. Fox, that "the measures lately pursued for the prevention of smuggling, had been effectual;" and assurances from Mr. Pitt, that the commutation tax, which was censured by Mr. Fox, had been proved by the test of experience, to be a wise, efficacious, and beneficial measure; and that the board of control, which Mr. Fox asserted, had increased peculation and corruption, had laid the foundation for checking those very evils, while in other respects it had already produced the most salutary effects.

THE first business brought before the house of commons, was, the Westminster scrutiny. On the 1st of February, Mr. Welbore Ellis moved, that the high bailiff should attend

CHAP. VI. 1785.

on the 4th, " to give an account of what he had done" in the scrutiny; and on the following day, colonel Fitzpatrick presented a petition from certain electors of Westminster, in which they complained, that the city of Westminster continued unrepresented; and praying, " that the house would immediately take such measures as would restore it to its undoubted right of having representatives in parliament." Mr. Fox being unable, on account of indisposition, to attend the house on the 4th, nothing was done till the 8th. On that day, the high bailiff, and Mr. Hargrave and Mr. Murphy, who had been successively his assessors, underwent a long examination; from which it appeared, that the scrutiny had continued for eight months; that in the parish of St. Anne, 25 votes had been struck from the poll of Mr. Fox, and 27 from that of sir Cecil Wray; that in the parish of St. Martin, 80 had been struck from the poll of Mr. Fox, and 60 from that of sir Cecil Wray; and that the inquiry into sir Cecil Wray's supposed bad votes in that parish, was unfinished; that the high bailiff was not yet enabled to make a return satisfactory to himself; that the proceedings of the scrutiny had been studiously delayed by the long examination of witnesses, and the long speeches of counsel; that it would probably last two years longer; that the high bailiff had long since proposed to enter upon the parishes of St. John and St. Margaret, in which the greatest number of bad votes was suspected, but that Mr. Fox objected; that the high bailiff had no power to administer an oath, to compel the attendance of witnesses, or to punish them for prevarication or falsehood; and that from want of sufficient authority, he had been treated with contempt, while presiding

in the court of scrutiny. These examinations, and the conversations to which they gave rise, occupied so much time, that it was necessary to adjourn the business to the following day, when Mr. Ellis submitted to the house the same motion, which he had made in the beginning of the former session, requiring the high bailiff to make an immediate return of two persons to serve in parliament for the city of Westminster.

Lord Mulgrave opposed this motion; maintaining, that there was no law which enjoined the high bailiff to make a return immediately upon the meeting of a new parliament; that it had always been an established maxim, founded on justice and equity, that upon the demand of a scrutiny by any party, the returning officer should satisfy his own conscience, and either grant or refuse a scrutiny, as he thought most conformable to the tenor of his oath; that in the present case, exercising the discretionary power vested in him by the constitution, he had granted a scrutiny, and that he ought not to be compelled by the house to stop it: he therefore moved, as an amendment, that the whole of the motion, except the first word, "that" should be omitted, and that the following words should be substituted, "the speaker do acquaint the high bailiff, first, that he is not precluded by the resolution of this house, communicated to him on the 8th of June last, from making a return, whenever he shall be satisfied in his own judgment that he can so do: and secondly, that this house is not satisfied, that the scrutiny has been proceeded in as expeditiously as it might have been; that it is his duty to adopt and enforce such just and reasonable regulations, as shall appear to him most likely to prevent unnecessary delay in future; that he is not precluded from so

doing by want of consent in either party; and that he may be assured of the support of this house, in the discharge of his duty." A long debate ensued, in which Mr. Pitt, in arguing against the original motion, contended, that the legality of the scrutiny had been solemnly decided by the house of commons in the last session; that the only point now to be considered, was, whether any circumstances had since arisen, which should induce the house to think it no longer expedient, that the scrutiny should be continued; that it was originally granted on the principle of such a number of bad votes having polled, that it was doubtful, who had the legal superiority, and also for the satisfaction of the conscience of the high bailiff; that many bad votes had already been discovered; that only about a fourth part of the votes had yet been examined; that the little progress made in the scrutiny was to be ascribed to the spirit of procrastination in Mr. Fox and his friends, and their refusal to enter upon those parishes, where the greatest number of bad votes was suspected, and to the unfitness of Mr. Hargrave for the office of assessor; that it would be easy to establish rules, which would cause greater expedition in future, under the new assessor, Mr. Murphy; that the high bailiff was still equally unable to ascertain, which of the candidates had a majority of legal votes; and therefore, that he ought to be left at liberty to proceed with the scrutiny.

The house having greatly applauded this speech, Mr. Fox began his reply to it, by saying, that he would not dispute Mr. Pitt's splendid abilities; he never had done it; he never would do it: indeed it would be absurd in him to dispute,

what he himself had always acknowledged; what the whole house admired. After a variety of extraneous matter relative to Mr. Pitt's India bill, and the conduct of the board of control, he argued at considerable length against the legality of the scrutiny, endeavoring to shew that it was the duty of the high bailiff, before the first meeting of the new parliament, to have returned the two candidates, who had the greatest number of votes; that to leave the large and populous city of Westminster unrepresented, was a gross and shameful breach of the constitution, which filled him and all its true friends with the most serious alarm and uneasiness; and that the representation of the commons ought to have been full and complete, before the house proceeded to the enactment of laws. Towards the end of his speech, he expressed his firm conviction, that the only object which the minister had in view, by supporting the continuance of the scrutiny, was, to harass and persecute an individual, whom he had honored by distinguishing him from a number of others, to make the victim of his resentment. He had always wished to stand well with the right honorable gentleman. He remembered the day, on which he had first congratulated the house upon the acquisition of his abilities: it had been his pride to fight, side by side with him, the battles of the constitution; little thinking that he would one day desert his principles, and lend himself to be the instrument of that secret influence, which they had both combated so successfully. He was prepared to find a formidable rival in the right honorable gentleman; a rival, who would leave him far behind in the pursuit of glory; but he never expected, that this rival would become his persecutor.

CHAP. VI. 1785.

"I fancied, I saw," said Mr. Fox, "so much generosity of soul, so much elevation of mind, that so low and groveling a passion could not have found an asylum in his breast. If he thinks, that it is merely for a seat in parliament that I am contending, he knows me not; but I was willing to take the hard task of stemming the tide of misrepresentation, which had been studiously and artfully disseminated through the kingdom. I was desirous, that the citizens of Westminster, to whom my public measures were best known, who knew even my private foibles, as I was bred and had always lived among them, should pass judgment on my political conduct; and proud I am of the issue, which has taught the more distant parts of the kingdom, that they were misled." He concluded with declaring, that if, to his astonishment, the house should be so far infatuated by party, as to forget that night what was due to the rights of election, and the purity of representation, the question should not sleep. He assured them, it should be brought forward in one shape or another, again and again; and he had no doubt of seeing them come, ultimately if not immediately, to a determination favorable to the people.

As soon as Mr. Fox sat down, Mr. Dundas rose, and spoke to the following effect:

"The right honorable gentleman over the way must excuse me, if I forbear from entering into all the subjects which he has introduced into his speech. Situated as I am, it is necessary, however, that I should say thus much to him, in answer to his vehement declamations against the India board; that when the proper day comes, I shall not be afraid to measure swords with him on that subject; but until then, I shall take

the liberty to consider, and I am sure this house will also consider, these daily declamations against that board, as mere wanton, coarse obloquy, which the right honorable gentleman has got such a habit of introducing upon all possible subjects, that even the Westminster scrutiny, however remote from the subject of India, is not to be excepted.

" With respect, sir, to the character which he has drawn of the right honorable gentleman near me, the best answer I can give him, is, by reducing all his high-flown language upon that subject into common sense and plain English, and I would then ask any man in the house, whether the sum and substance of all his declamations on this head, be more or less than this—that when first he discovered the right honorable gentleman's rising abilities in this house, he was earnestly desirous of connecting him with his party; he was anxious to take him under his protection and tuition: But as soon as ever he found the right honorable gentleman unwilling to submit to his trammels, and determined to think for himself, from that time he had resolved to set him down, for the most haughty, corrupt, unconstitutional, and dangerous man and minister that ever this country had produced. It is just thus, indeed, that the right honorable gentleman over the way, has at all times thought proper to monopolize all patriotism, all public principles, all love of liberty, to his own single self.—" I am the palladium of the liberties of the country, I am the champion of the constitution, I am the only man of the people, I am the single Atlas of this free state."—This, sir, is the language, and these are the precise arguments, which the right honorable gentleman applies now, and always has applied, to all debates,

CHAP. VI. 1785.

at all times, upon all subjects, against all ministers, in all the exigencies of his case. He accuses my right honorable friend of presumption; but I appeal to any man, whether the panegyric which the right honorable gentleman has this day made on himself, did not consist of praises so profuse and extravagant, and of flattery so gross, that I am sure there is not one of his friends, who would have had the indecency to load him, before his face, with half the praises, which, in this moment of boasted modesty, he has thought it so becoming to heap upon himself.

If, therefore, I should feel a little insensible, both to the praises which the right honorable gentleman heaps upon himself, and to the abuse which he pours upon us, (of which certainly I have the honor to receive no small share) I hope, sir, I have explained what it is that has rendered me thus callous. The time was, when his invectives fell, with some sensible force and efficacy, on the ministerial band, whom he was opposing; but when I see him pouring forth alternate praises and execrations on the same men, according as they are his political friends or foes, he must excuse my telling him, that all his violence, all his sarcasms, and all his insults, are not capable of irritating any one single passion in my breast; and I may hope even, that in the vicissitudes of political affairs, the time, perhaps, may come, when I may be recompensed for all the grossness of these declamations, by the most unbounded panegyrics on my virtues, my talents, and my political character. In the mean time, my mind is at perfect ease, because I know, and all the world knows with me, that the right honorable gentleman considers the actions

and characters of public men as things entirely subservient to his own political views, nay, and to his views at the mere moment when he is speaking.

"Having said thus much on the subject of the India bill, and on the respective characters of the two right honorable gentlemen, which I have been so necessarily led to do, I shall confine myself now to the true question before the house; and, in the first place, since the right honorable gentleman is for ever exclaiming, how the constitution is violated, I must beg and insist on a plain answer to this plain question—Whether, in the election of Vandeput and Trentham, the constitution was not just as much broken as now? that scrutiny, sir, lasted for fifteen months, and this has lasted eight months. Where were then the violated rights of the electors of Westminster? Where was then this ruin to the constitution? "Was not Westminster just as much unrepresented as now? Were not taxes laid on the inhabitants of Westminster, without their consent, just as now? Was not every evil, every inconvenience, every outrage on the constitution, as flagrant in that case as in the present?" And yet, sir, if we look into the debates in those times, we find not one syllable was ever uttered about the danger to the constitution, not one syllable of all that language, which is so familiar in the mouth of the right honorable gentleman on this and on every question. It is said always, that that was an election in the case of a vacancy by death, and this on a general election; but what difference does that make to the constitution? Sir, I do maintain, therefore, that the constitution is likely to go on as well after this scrutiny in the city of Westminster, as it did after that of

Vandeput and Trentham; and when the right honorable gentleman tells us, that in his capacity of champion of the constitution, he cannot sit silent, he cannot rest, he cannot sleep, until the vote of the house is rescinded, and the outrage is repaired, I shall ask him, how he has slept since the year 1750; for it is ridiculous to contend, that the circumstance of its having been then a vacancy by death, and not by general election, can be any salvo to the rights of the Westminster electors, or any safeguard to the constitution.

"Why, sir, suppose this election had happened in either of those two cases, when Westminster became vacant by the right honorable gentleman's becoming a secretary of state, Westminster might then have suffered precisely the same disfranchisement, and the constitution have had the same wound which it has received, and yet all would have been exactly according to law, and according to precedent; and in truth, sir, if we examine the respective histories of the times, we shall find a great resemblance in the two cases, and in the two elections. There were then the same exertions, the same contentions of the aristocracy, the same intrigues as now. Both the great men and the great women of the country were seen to use the same condescension in both cases; and I will add, that there were the same affected delays in both cases: in point of delay, however, there has been this difference; that in the year 1750, above 1,400 votes were scrutinized in five months; and in the present case, not 200 have been gone through, even in the enormous time of eight months. Will any man then deny, what one of the resolutions in the amendment takes notice of? that this house is not satisfied that there has been no

unnecessary delay in the scrutiny? and, sir, I appeal to any man, whether it has not been proved at your bar, that it has been the wish, the design of Mr. Fox, to procrastinate the decision of the scrutiny.

"The high bailiff has told you, sir, that he all along understood St. Margaret's and St. John's to be the parishes where the chief suspicion lay; and I maintain, that he had a perfect right, without the consent of either of the parties, to have proceeded first to those parishes: but Mr. Fox, he tells you, insisted that this would be a partial arrangement, and it was agreed to ballot which parish should come first. It is known, that the parishes in question come next in turn; and I would appeal, therefore, to the common sense of the house, whether it is not reasonable, natural, and by all means expedient, that the high bailiff should be permitted to pursue his scrutiny, at least into those parishes, being informed at the same time, that as soon as ever he is capable of satisfying his judgment, he is at perfect liberty to make his return.

"The house has already gone the length of determining a scrutiny to be legal, even after the return of the writ, should the circumstance of the case demand it; and truly, sir, how much more dangerous would it be to the constitution, if it should become a settled point, that all scrutinies are unlawful, and that if a sufficient number of men are found, who will take their oath at the hustings, every writ must be instantly made up, however notorious the invalidity of votes may be, and must be thrown upon the table of this house? The truth is, that the right of voting in Westminster, is not sufficiently ascertained, and a bill is wanted, therefore, for this purpose:

CHAP. VI. 1785.

but, sir, we must not decide against the law of the land; we must not contradict the analogies of law in these cases; we must permit scrutinies, when the necessity of them, in order to form a right judgment, is clear; and if any thing is wanted to expedite and facilitate such cases in future, a new law must be made for the purpose."

The house divided at six o'clock in the morning, and the original motion was negatived by a majority of 174 to 135. The amended motion was then carried without any division, and afterwards read to the high bailiff, by the speaker from the chair.

The comparatively small majority by which Mr. Ellis's motion was lost, proved that the means used to excite dissatisfaction and odium against the scrutiny, had not been ineffectual, and was a sufficient encouragement to Mr. Fox and his friends, to bring the subject again before the house, as Mr. Fox had threatened. Accordingly, on the 18th of February, colonel Fitzpatrick presented a petition from certain electors of Westminster, stating, that they had reason to believe, that the evidence given to the house, was defective and incomplete, and that farther evidence might be produced; and therefore praying, that they might be permitted to lay such evidence before the house, and to be heard by their counsel. Some doubts were expressed, whether this petition ought to be received. It was agreed on all sides, that if it were in substance the same as that which had been presented a little time since, and already decided upon, it could not be received consistently with the rules of the house; but it being urged, that the present petition professedly related to new facts

recently discovered, it was admitted: after which an order was made, that the petitioners should be heard, by their counsel, on the following Monday; and that the high bailiff, and the counsel of the three candidates, should attend.

On that day, as soon as it was proposed, that the counsel of the petitioners should be called in, lord Frederick Campbell observed, that the proceedings would extend to an immeasurable length, if the counsel should be at liberty to range at large into the merits of the election, and that it would be inconsistent with the dignity of the house to allow them to argue against the legality of the scrutiny, which was decided in the last session, and confirmed in the present, after due re-consideration; and therefore he moved, that these words should be added to the motion just made:—"And that the counsel be restrained from going into any matters, but such as tend to prove the evidence offered at the bar of the house, on Wednesday the 9th of this instant February, defective and incomplete; or such other matters as may have been discovered since the order of this house of the same date." After a long debate, lord Frederick Campbell's amendment, which was supported by Mr. Pitt, was carried by a majority of 203 to 145; and when the counsel, Mr. Erskine and Mr. Pigott, were called in, and heard the motion read, they informed the house, that, as they could not submit to the restraint thus imposed upon them, without departing from the positive instructions of their clients, the electors of Westminster, they must beg leave to withdraw themselves from the bar.

The high bailiff then underwent a short examination; the object of which was to prove, in contradiction to what he had

said on former days, that Mr. Fox's counsel had, as early as last July, proposed immediately to examine the votes in the parishes of St. John and St. Margaret, and that the offer was rejected by sir Cecil Wray's counsel. This point was now mentioned to the house for the first time, and it was by no means established by any satisfactory evidence. Had, indeed, this proposal been actually made in a regular manner, it is scarcely credible, that so important a fact would have been omitted in the former debate, especially as Mr. Fox's party were accused of a marked reluctance to inquire into the votes of those parishes; and Mr. Fox himself had declared, in the house of commons, that he should have been "an idiot," if he had acceded to the very same proposal, when made to him by the high bailiff. After the examination was ended, colonel Fitzpatrick made a motion similar to that of Mr. Ellis, and it was rejected by a majority of only nine; the numbers being 145, and 136.

On the 3d of March, lord Muncaster presented a petition to the house of commons, from sir Cecil Wray's committee for conducting the scrutiny, stating, that they had carefully investigated the votes in the parishes of St. Margaret and St. John, and had discovered, that 400 persons had voted, as inhabitants of those parishes, not one of whom could be found to exist; and praying, that the scrutiny might be allowed to proceed. It was ordered that the petition should lie upon the table; and Mr. Sawbridge immediately rose, for the purpose of making a motion to put an end to the scrutiny, in words nearly the same as the motions of Mr. Ellis and colonel Fitzpatrick, upon the ground, that it had now lasted nearly nine months, and

sir Cecil Wray had gained only two votes. Mr. Pitt moved an immediate adjournment, which, after a short debate, was negatived by a majority of 38, the numbers being 162, and 124. Mr. Sawbridge's motion was then carried, without a division; and the following day, the high bailiff returned lord Hood and Mr. Fox.

On the 9th of March, Mr. Francis made a motion, for expunging from the journals, the resolution of the 8th of June of the preceding year, authorizing the scrutiny, which, after a long debate, was negatived, by a majority of 242, to 137.

It must be acknowledged, that the Westminster scrutiny proved to be a business of a most unpleasant and distressing nature to Mr. Pitt. He was induced to engage in it, from a persuasion, that, within a reasonable time, a decided majority of legal votes would be substantiated in favor of sir Cecil Wray. It was unfortunately begun in parishes to which the principal part of Mr. Fox's bad votes did not belong; and the contrivances used by him and his committee, to protract and impede the proceedings, and to confine them as long as possible to those parishes, seemed to indicate a consciousness, that his cause would not bear a general investigation. The slow progress, the immense trouble and expence, the circumstance of so large a city remaining so long unrepresented, the pretended danger of delaying the return beyond the meeting of parliament, the idea of persecution imputed to government, and the small advantage gained by sir Cecil Wray, all concurred to cause a change of sentiment in members of parliament, and, in some degree, made an unfavorable impression upon the public mind—too common a consequence, when an undertaking, however highly and justly approved at first, fails

CHAP. VI. 1785.

of the expected success. Mr. Pitt, now in the plenitude of power and popularity upon every other question, had upon this, the mortification of finding some of his most respectable friends, both private and political, either voting against him, absenting themselves from the house, or affording a reluctant support; and at last, after a long and painful struggle, and many acrimonious debates, he was compelled to yield to a majority, not more than 123 persons voting with him for the continuance of the scrutiny, although, a few days afterwards, very nearly double that number voted against rescinding the resolution, by which it was originally authorized. While, therefore, they condemned the measure, as inexpedient, they maintained its legality; while they thought, that to proceed in it, would answer no good purpose, they pronounced it consistent with the principles of the constitution, and the practice of parliament. There seemed, indeed, to be an increased anxiety in members, in consequence of what had passed, to testify their conviction, that the scrutiny was in itself legal and constitutional, as in June 1784, only 178 voted for the motion, directing the high bailiff to enter upon the scrutiny; and in March 1785, 242 voted, that the motion should remain upon the journals, as a recorded proof of the deliberate opinion of the house, that a returning officer is at liberty to grant a scrutiny, even after his writ is returnable, if he conscientiously believes, that he cannot otherwise make a just and proper return, conformably to the oath which he has taken.

THE business brought before the house of commons, in the present session, by Mr. Pitt, may be comprehended under three heads,—finance, parliamentary reform, and a commercial

intercourse between Great Britain and Ireland—of these I proceed to give some account.

THE first subject relative to finance, which Mr. Pitt submitted to the consideration of the house, was, the reports of the commissioners of public accounts. After paying high compliments to the ability and diligence of the commissioners, he said, that their reports, twelve in number, threw great light upon a variety of matters, hitherto involved in the most impenetrable obscurity; that in consequence of the suggestions contained in them, some important regulations in the payment of the land-tax, in the post-office, and in the army pay-office, had already been adopted; and that the information which they furnished, might be made the foundation of still farther advantage to the public. He then adverted to several points, connected with these reports, which required the authority of parliament. He first stated, that the manner in which the accounts were kept in the navy-office, was extremely complicated and perplexed; and that the treasurers of the navy had very large sums in their hands, which they were suffered to retain, even after they were out of office, in some cases, for no less a period than forty years; and that, at the present moment, there were four distinct accounts of as many treasurers of the navy, open at the pay-office. As a remedy to these evils, he proposed, that the mode of keeping the accounts should be simplified, particularly with respect to the sub-accountants, according to a plan, which he had arranged, with the assistance of the present treasurer of the navy (Mr. Dundas); the principal

CHAP. VI. 1785.

provisions of which were, that the money, when issued at the exchequer, for the service of the navy, should be placed in the custody of the bank, from whence the treasurer should only take a sum sufficient to answer small contingent demands, all large bills being to be paid by draughts upon the bank, for naval services only; that the treasurer should close his accounts every year; and that, when he quitted office, he should transfer the balance in his hands to his successor. To effect these purposes, he proposed to introduce, "a bill for better regulating the office of the treasurer of his majesty's navy *."

He next reminded the house, that it was proved, by a book produced at the end of the session of 1783, in consequence of a motion made by him, that upwards of forty millions of money, which had been issued for the public services, were then unaccounted for; and he now mentioned, that the inquiry since instituted, respecting the accounts of persons to whom this immense sum had been advanced, would cause 257,000*l.* to be paid immediately into the exchequer, which might be applied to the service of the present year, and that farther sums would be recovered, when other accounts had been examined. It had also appeared, from the sixth report of the commissioners of public accounts, that in 1782, the accounts of four treasurers of the navy, and three paymasters of the army, besides those then in office, remained unsettled. To prevent the recurrence of the same delay, inconvenience, and loss to the public, he said, it was his earnest wish to make an entire change in the system of

* It was at first intended that the bill should extend to the ordnance office, but it was afterwards thought better to confine it to the navy office.

passing the different public accounts at the exchequer, which however proper it might have been when originally established, was infinitely too intricate and dilatory for the present enlarged expenditure of the country. He observed, that the office of the two auditors of imprest, was a mere sinecure, for which each had, in some years of war, received 16,000 *l.*; that the whole duty was performed by their deputies and clerks, who looked no farther than to the arithmetical correctness of the accounts, considering it sufficient, if the vouchers, such as they were, tallied with the charges; that they had no power to make an useful inquiry, as they could not examine the accountants upon oath; and that, in fact, the whole plan of auditing the accounts, was, from change of circumstances, and most inexplicable and culpable neglect, become absolutely nugatory, affording no check or control whatever upon the expenditure of the money, and open to collusion and fraud of every description. He therefore thought it right, that the office of auditors of imprest should be abolished, a suitable allowance being made to the present auditors, who held their patents for life; and that in their stead, a board of five commissioners should be substituted, with ample powers, who should strictly investigate and audit the public accounts of every department; and as a security for the effectual discharge of their extensive and important duty, they were to hold their offices quamdiu se bene gesserint. Upon these grounds, and with this view, he proposed to introduce, "a bill for the better examining and auditing the public accounts of this kingdom."

He lastly called to the recollection of the house, that in the year 1783, he introduced a bill for the regulation of the fees taken in the public offices, which passed the house of commons,

CHAP. VI. 1785.

but, through the influence of the then administration, was rejected by the house of lords: he said, that he was still convinced, that this was a subject deserving the interposition of the legislature, without which the existing abuses could not be corrected; and therefore he proposed to introduce "a bill for appointing commissioners to inquire into the fees, gratuities, perquisites, and emoluments, which are, or have been lately, received in the several public offices to be therein mentioned, and to examine into any abuses which may exist in the same, and to report such observations as shall occur to them, for the better conducting and managing the business transacted in the said offices."

Mr. Pitt moved for these three bills on the same day, as arising out of the reports of the commissioners before mentioned, and calculated to carry into effect economical reform and improvement in expediting public business, which the facts collected proved to be highly important to the national interest. The three bills passed both houses, with scarcely any opposition: the only division which took place, was in the house of commons, upon the third reading of the bill for auditing the public accounts, which was carried by a majority of 74 to 15.

In this session, it was proved by evidence at the bar of the house of commons, that the tax, imposed last year upon plain cotton stuffs, had been attended with injurious consequences to the manufacturer; and therefore Mr. Pitt introduced a bill for its repeal, which passed without any opposition.

The first regular discussion, which took place relative to the general state of the finances of the country, was upon the

11th of April, when Mr. Pitt moved for an account of the nett produce of the taxes, in the quarters ending January 5th and April 5th, in the years 1784 and 1785. He took that opportunity of informing the house, that the bills, which were passed in the last session, for the prevention of smuggling, and the regulations which had been adopted in the collection and management of the different branches of the revenue, together with the extension of trade, consequent upon the return of peace, had already caused so great an increase in the produce of the taxes, as to justify a confident hope, that by the next year, the income of the country would not only be equal to the expenditure, but would afford a considerable surplus, which might be applied to the gradual liquidation of the national debt. Upon this and other occasions, when Mr. Pitt had incidentally expressed the same sentiments, Mr. Fox, Mr. Eden, and Mr. Sheridan accused him of being inaccurate in his statements, and too sanguine in his expectations; but, on the other hand, Mr. Pitt contended, that no error had been proved, either in his principles, or in his calculations; and he complained, that his opponents were inclined to take a gloomy and desponding view of the national finance. He said, that those, who for party purposes, wilfully misstate facts to the public, and exhibit false and melancholy pictures of the revenue, are the worst of traitors to their country: and to convince the house, that there was just ground for the opinions he had delivered on this and on preceding days, he himself moved for a great variety of accounts, and supported the motions of other members for papers, calculated to throw light upon any of the difficult and intricate points, which were contested.

CHAP. VI. 1785. Mr. Fox, however, and several other gentlemen who acted with him, notwithstanding their opinions and statements relative to the revenue, and their constant lamentations over the heavy burdens under which the people groaned, urged Mr. Pitt to lose no time in establishing a sinking fund, and imposing the necessary additional taxes; disclaiming at the same time all factious motives, or any desire to involve ministers in unpopular measures. To which Mr. Pitt replied, that it was his intention, that this fund should not commence till the next year; because as there was such a flattering prospect of increasing prosperity, he thought it better to defer it for a twelvemonth, as any ideas, now formed upon the subject, would probably be materially affected by the favorable turn, which, by that time, it was hoped affairs would take; conceiving, that the whole of the business might be more easily reduced to a system, after it should be seen, how far the revenue would, by means of its expected improvements, answer the purpose in view.

On the 9th of May, Mr. Pitt opened the budget, and observed, that the effects of the late calamitous war were felt in the expences of the current year, as it was necessary to fulfil contracts, which had been entered into previous to the signature of the preliminaries of peace, and as some of our ships had not yet returned from the distant parts of the world. The supplies which had been voted, amounted to 9,737,868*l.*, and the ways and means fell short of that sum, about a million: this deficiency was to be provided for. The present low state of the funds*, and the probability of their rise before the next session, induced him not to borrow the money, and create

* The 3 per cent consols were about 58.

additional stock in the ordinary way, but to obtain it from the bank upon exchequer bills, at five per cent, by which means not only the rate of interest would be rather less, but the bank would lend the money as it might be wanted, and only charge interest upon the different sums from the time they should be advanced. He stated, that the navy and ordnance debts, calculated to the 5th of the following July, amounted to rather more than ten millions; and as the large quantity of navy bills and ordnance debentures, now in circulation, was the principal cause of the depression of the funds, he considered it his indispensable duty, immediately to fund the whole of these bills and debentures. He preferred a five per cent fund for this purpose*, because it afforded a more easy and expeditious mode of redemption; and he mentioned, that in funding ten millions, upon the terms stipulated with the bill holders, stock would be created to the amount of 11,140,000*l.* the interest of which, and expences of management, would be about 563,000*l.* He reminded the house, that an interest of four per cent upon six millions, amounting to 240,000*l.* had been provided in the last session†; and consequently, on this account, there remained only 323,000*l.* to be now raised. To this sum were to be added 50,000*l.* as interest upon the million to be borrowed of the bank, and 40,000*l.* on account of the repeal of the tax

* The interest in a 5 per cent fund was about six shillings per cent more than it would have been in a 3 per cent fund; that is, 30,000*l.* a year upon 10 millions. Mr. Pitt estimated that three millions would be saved, when the debt should be paid off.

† In opening the budget last year, Mr. Pitt considered himself as proposing taxes which would produce 280,000*l.* a year, being the interest of 4 per cent upon seven millions of navy bills and ordnance debentures.

CHAP. VI. 1785.

upon cotton stuffs: the whole sum therefore to be raised, was 413,000*l.* for which purpose he proposed an additional tax upon male servants, increasing in a higher proportion than the number kept, and upon post horses; and also taxes upon female servants, shops, pawnbrokers, and gloves; and a diminution in the allowance made on salt carried coastwise, which would increase the produce of the tax upon that article.

Mr. Fox, who, in the previous debates upon finance, had promised to support and assist Mr. Pitt in imposing any new taxes, which might be deemed necessary, and had declared a readiness to take his share of any odium they might occasion, when he found that the tax upon shops, and that upon female servants, were disapproved both in the house and in the country, strenuously joined in the opposition to them; and endeavored by all those arts, of which he was so fully master, to add to their unpopularity. The bills, however, enacting these taxes, passed both houses of parliament, after several divisions, in which the majorities were by no means great; but the modifications introduced by Mr. Pitt, in order to obviate some of the principal objections to them, were likely to render the duties less productive than had been originally expected. To make up for this deficiency, he proposed taxes upon attornies, and upon warrants of arrest. The tax also upon game certificates was increased; and coachmakers were required to take out an annual licence, and to pay a small tax upon every carriage they made. Mr. Pitt estimated the annual produce of all these various taxes, at rather more than 413,000*l.* the sum wanted; and he observed, that the collection of them would

be attended with very little expence, and that there would be no necessity for the appointment of a single new officer.

Mr. Pitt did not forget his engagement, to bring before the house, in the present session, the business of parliamentary reform. This was indeed a favorite object with him, to which he devoted much time and thought; and he sought every opportunity of explaining in private, his sentiments and views respecting it, to those members who had hitherto opposed every motion upon this subject. It is natural to suppose, that his present official situation would give great weight to his arguments; and that the persons who were in general supporters of his administration, would feel a desire to concur with him upon a question, in which his opinion was so decided, and his wishes so strong. He prevailed with some; but the objections of others he was unable to overcome.

He thought it his duty, also, to communicate his plan to the king, whose private sentiments he knew to be unfriendly to any change in the construction of the house of commons; and he received the following answer from his majesty, dated March 20:

"I have received Mr. Pitt's paper, containing the heads of his plan, for a parliamentary reform, which I look on as a mark of attention. I should have delayed acknowledging the receipt of it till I saw him on Monday, had not his letter expressed, that there is but one issue of the business he could look upon as fatal, that is, the possibility of the measure being rejected by the weight of those who are supposed to be connected with government. Mr. Pitt must recollect, that though I have

CHAP. VI. 1785.

ever thought it unfortunate, that he had early engaged himself in this measure, yet that I have ever said, that as he was clear of the propriety of the measure, he ought to lay his thoughts before the house; that out of personal regard to him, I would avoid giving any opinion to any one, on the opening of the door to parliamentary reform, except to him; therefore, I am certain, Mr. Pitt cannot suspect my having influenced any one on the occasion. If others choose, for base ends, to impute such a conduct to me, I must bear it as former false suggestions. Indeed, on a question of such magnitude, I should think very ill of any man, who took a part on either side, without the maturest consideration, and who would suffer his civility to any one, to make him vote contrary to his own opinion. The conduct of some of Mr. Pitt's most intimate friends on the Westminster scrutiny, shews, there are questions, men will not, by friendship, be biassed to adopt."

In 1782, Mr. Pitt had moved for the appointment of a committee, to consider the state of the representation in the house of commons; and in the following year, he brought forward several resolutions, as the basis of the plan which he then wished to be adopted. Having failed in both those instances, he determined, upon the present occasion, to submit to the house, a precise and explicit proposition, and at once to apply for leave to bring in a bill, which should contain the result of his full consideration upon this important subject, and be in itself complete and final. By this mode of proceeding, he hoped to quiet the alarm of those, who were fearful of touching the constitution, in any one point, lest the alteration should, under the mask of reform, be progressively carried to a dangerous

length. He again reprobated the wild and impracticable notion, of universal suffrage, and said, that, in his judgment, the just description of the popular branch of our legislature, at this day, ought to be, "an assembly freely elected, between whom and the mass of the people, there was the closest union and most perfect sympathy." Such an house of commons, it was the purpose of the framers of our constitution to erect; and he had no other wish, than to restore the house of commons to that its original state and character, instead of the corrupt and inadequate system into which it had unfortunately degenerated. Those who went farther—those who were advocates for individual representation, deluded themselves with impossibilities; and diverted the public from that plain and practicable path, in which they might travel with safety and ease, to launch them into an unbounded sea, where they had no pilot to direct, no star to guide them. He expressed an earnest desire to convince the house, that what he was about to suggest, was not an innovation, but perfectly conformable to the practice of our ancestors in the purest days. To prove that it was an indisputable doctrine of antiquity, that the state of representation was to be changed with the change of circumstances, he stated, that from the reign of Edward the first, the earliest period in which distinct descriptions of men could be traced in the representation, to that of Charles the second, there were few reigns in which the representation was not varied. The successive kings exercised a power of summoning, or not summoning, as they pleased; acting always upon this principle, that the places should have such a population, as entitled them to send, or rather subjected them to

the duty of sending, members to parliament. As one borough decayed, and another arose, the one was abolished, and the other invested with the right of choosing members, not however in such a manner, that the house of commons always consisted of the same exact number; for upon that point, there was no antient law or custom,—nothing, in fact, even in these times, preventing the executive branch of the legislature from adding to, or diminishing, the present number, but the act of union. So great, indeed, had been the variation, that in the seventeenth century, the crown had ceased to call upon seventy-two boroughs to send burgesses to the house of commons; thirty-six of which, after the restoration, petitioned to be reinstated in the enjoyment of their ancient franchises. Their petition was granted; but the other thirty-six remained disfranchised. It was therefore evident, that change was perfectly congenial to the original principle of representation, and consistent with the practice of former times. The excellence of the British constitution was the fruit of gradual improvement;—and had a resistance to all reform, from apprehension of the bad consequences which might possibly ensue, prevailed in former times, Englishmen would never have enjoyed their present boasted privileges and blessings. Upon these authorities, and upon these grounds, he felt himself warranted in proposing, that thirty-six decayed boroughs, each electing two members, should no longer send burgesses to parliament; and that in their room, the different counties and the metropolis should elect seventy-two additional members, which would constitute a just proportion between county and borough representatives, without increasing the number of the house of

commons; and he farther proposed, that copyholders should vote for counties as well as freeholders; the difference of tenure not justifying, in these days, the distinction in respect of voting, which at present subsisted. In the lapse of time, and fluctuation of human affairs, other boroughs might become decayed, the members for which were to be transferred to populous and flourishing towns, previously sending no members to parliament; and to prevent any doubt, a definite number of houses was to be the criterion of a decayed borough. Disavowing, however, all idea of compulsion, he proposed that no old borough should be disfranchised, and no new place authorized to elect members, except upon its own spontaneous application. Boroughs being, in many instances, a species of valuable inheritance, and of private property, a voluntary surrender of their rights was not to be expected, without an adequate consideration; and therefore he proposed the establishment of a fund for the purpose of purchasing these franchises, which, being of different descriptions, the consideration-money would of course vary.

Such, he said, was the general outline of his plan, the operation of which would be gradual. The provisions of the act would be called into action from time to time, as cases arose. A clear and permanent rule for perpetual improvement in the representation, would be established, equally applicable to the present and all future periods, but giving no sanction or countenance to vague and chimerical schemes of reformation. He conceived it, indeed, to be free from all serious objection, and at the same time, calculated to create that union and sympathy between the constituent and representative, which was the

CHAP. VI. 1785.

surest foundation of liberty to individuals, and of strength and glory to the nation, and the best means, as far as human foresight could extend, for rendering the British constitution immortal. Leaving the detail of the execution to be hereafter discussed, he concluded with moving, "That leave be given to bring in a bill to amend the representation of the people of England in parliament."

Mr. Pitt had the mortification of finding himself defeated a third time, his motion, after a long debate, being negatived by 248 to 174. This was his last attempt to obtain a reform in parliament. Having upon this occasion made every effort, and exerted all the influence in his power, both publicly and privately, and failed by so considerable a majority, he was convinced that any farther trial in the present house of commons, must be ineffectual, and therefore he desisted; and we shall see, that soon after the next general election, he thought it his duty, on account of a most material change in the situation of the country, to oppose a motion upon the subject, brought forward by another person.

It now remains that I give an account of the plan, which Mr. Pitt submitted to the house of commons in this session, relative to a commercial intercourse between Great Britain and Ireland; but it will be necessary previously to take a short retrospect of the affairs of Ireland, that a judgment may be formed of the difficulties, which he had to encounter in that part of the empire.

Though Ireland had, from a very early period, laws of its own, and a parliament similarly constituted to that of England,

the English parliament, for several centuries prior to the present reign, exercised the right of making laws binding upon Ireland. Besides this mark of dependance, the English privy council exercised the right of altering or suppressing any acts, which had passed the Irish parliament; and the courts of law in England exercised an appellant jurisdiction over the courts in Ireland. Before the restoration, Ireland enjoyed every commercial benefit and privilege in common with England; and the navigation act, which passed immediately after that great event, and regulated the conveyance of the articles of trade by sea, placed the two kingdoms, in that respect, upon precisely the same footing. But from a subsequent part of the reign of Charles the second, to that of his present majesty, the English parliament, with a view of promoting the trade and manufactures of its own country, from time to time imposed a great variety of restrictions upon the commerce of Ireland, without consulting the parliament of that kingdom. These restrictions operated in a manner highly injurious to the industry and exertions of the Irish, who felt their oppressive effect the more acutely, from observing their English neighbors and fellow subjects rising into wealth and importance, by means of that very trade, of which they considered themselves unjustly deprived. The unequal terms of connexion, which England, as the seat of empire, and possessing superior power, thus authoritatively prescribed to Ireland, had, since more enlightened maxims of policy began to prevail, been the source of no small degree of jealousy and dissatisfaction among all ranks of the Irish people; and especially among those who were engaged in trade and manufactures: But they acquiesced

in silent forbearance, till the American war, while it increased their burdens, reduced their commerce to still narrower limits. As their distress became greater, their complaints grew louder; and at length resolutions were entered into by the inhabitants of the trading towns, to prevent the importation and consumption of British manufactures: and those, who ventured to refuse compliance with these unauthorized mandates, were treated with every species of violence and outrage. But even under these circumstances of suffering and discontent, their zeal in defence of their country against the common enemy, broke forth in a manner, remarkable in itself, and which led to very important consequences.

The disasters in America having made it necessary for our government to withdraw a large proportion of the regiments from Ireland, that kingdom, at the commencement of the war between Great Britain and France, contained but a very small military force. In the summer of 1778, the French were known to be collecting a considerable army upon their coast, and it was generally believed, that they intended to make a descent upon Ireland, in its present weak and unprotected state. Under this apprehension, the Irish gentry, yeomen, traders, and other persons, resident in the most exposed districts of the country, began to form themselves into volunteer companies; which patriotic spirit spread so rapidly, and was so well directed, that, in a short time, the volunteers exceeded 40,000 in number, the greater part of whom were as well disciplined as regular troops. This immense force, raised, trained, and commanded by officers, elected by their respective corps, without any pay or authority from the king, but with the

avowed assistance and active co-operation of several persons of high rank and large property, was a most extraordinary, if not an unexampled, establishment; and it was not to be expected, that so numerous a body of men, not acting under any legal control, or even holding any communication with the executive power, with arms in their hands, and many national grounds of complaint, would confine themselves to the original object of their association. Their military character necessarily caused them to assemble frequently; and in deliberating about the means of averting evils threatened by a foreign enemy, they not unnaturally digressed to the internal grievances under which they were actually laboring from the British government. The degrading and pernicious restrictions upon their trade and manufactures, which were more severely and more extensively felt than any other of their hardships, first occupied their attention; and conscious, as they must have been, of their own strength, and well knowing the want of vigor and capacity in administration, it is by no means surprizing, that in dwelling upon the long-endured oppression, and in referring to the primary cause of the present distress of their country, they made use of aggravating and inflammatory language. These speeches, circulated into every part of the kingdom, could not fail to produce a considerable ferment in the minds of men, already prepared to receive any unfavorable impression; especially as two recent attempts* in the British house of commons, to obtain relief for the trade of Ireland, had, in consequence of the most determined opposition, both from the manufacturers and ministers, almost entirely failed.

* In 1777 and 1778.

It was, however, very generally acknowledged in England, that a removal of some of the prohibitions, to which the trade of Ireland was subject, was, under present circumstances, indispensable; but no step being taken by administration, and no notice being given of their intention to propose any measure upon the subject, the house of lords, on the 11th of May 1779, in consequence of a motion from lord Rockingham, unanimously voted an address to the king, in which they submitted to his majesty's consideration, the distressed and impoverished state of his subjects in Ireland, and besought him to order, that there should be "prepared and laid before parliament, such particulars relative to the trade and manufactures of Great Britain and Ireland, as would enable the national wisdom to pursue effectual measures for promoting the common strength, wealth, and commerce of his majesty's subjects in both kingdoms." On the 26th of the same month, the house of commons, with the same unanimity, voted a similar address, upon the motion of lord Beauchamp, who was at that time a lord of the treasury. To these addresses, his majesty replied, that he would give directions accordingly; but ministers remaining still inactive, it was moved by lord Shelburne, in the house of lords, on the 2d of June, that another address should be presented to his majesty, requesting that he would be pleased to allow the British parliament to continue to sit; and also, that he would forthwith issue his proclamation for calling together the parliament of Ireland, that the just complaints of his subjects in that kingdom, might be fully considered, and remedied without delay. This motion, being resisted by administration, was negatived; and the prorogation of parliament taking place

soon after, nothing was done, during the recess, for the relief and defence of Ireland, except by sending a small quantity of arms for the use of the volunteers, which was an acknowledgment of their legality and usefulness, and, of course, increased the power of that already important body of men, who were now in a condition either to repel the attacks of a foreign enemy, or to awe the government of their own country. Their numbers and discipline seem to have caused France to abandon all idea of invasion, if it were in reality ever entertained; and their attention being therefore wholly directed to domestic concerns, their influence soon became apparent in the proceedings of the parliaments of both kingdoms.

The parliament of Ireland met on the 12th of October 1779, and both houses voted addresses to the king, in which they explicitly declared, that nothing but the grant of a free trade could save Ireland from ruin; and thanks were voted to the volunteers, unanimously in the house of commons, and with only one dissentient voice in the house of lords. But these addresses and votes of thanks did not quiet the minds of the people, or inspire them with confidence in the sincerity and perseverance of parliament. A numerous and daring mob soon after assembled before the house of commons in Dublin, and required the members, as they entered, to swear, that they would vote for a free trade; and, as the means of compelling England to grant it, that they would also vote for a short money bill. The members were intimidated; and two money bills were passed, contrary to all former custom, for only six months. Nor was this the only alteration which now took place: The mutiny bill, passed annually by the British parliament, had

CHAP. VI. 1785.

hitherto been considered as binding upon the army in Ireland; but that point being called in question by some of the modern innovators, the Irish parliament, at their suggestion, now, for the first time, passed a mutiny bill for the army in Ireland.

The British parliament met on the 25th of November, and the king, in his speech from the throne, informed the two houses, that "in consequence of their addresses, presented to him in the last session, relative to the trade and manufactures of Ireland, he had ordered such papers to be collected and laid before them, as might assist their deliberations in this important business; and he recommended to them, to consider what farther benefits and advantages might be extended to that kingdom, by such regulations, and such methods, as might most effectually promote the common strength, wealth, and interests of all his dominions."

At length, on the 13th of December 1779, lord North submitted to the house of commons, three propositions for the relief of the trade of Ireland. The first was, the repeal of those laws, which prohibited the exportation of Irish woollen manufactures from Ireland*: the second was, the repeal of that part of the Act of 19 Geo. 2, which prohibited the exportation of glass from Ireland†; and the third was, a permission to Ireland to trade to and from the British colonies in America, the West

* The 10th and 11th of William and Mary, by imposing a heavy export duty upon woollens, amounting in fact to a prohibition, had put an end to that manufacture in Ireland: this produced a contraband exportation of wool to France, where it was manufactured.

† Previously to this act of Geo. 2, the Irish might export glass of their own manufacture, and import glass from every country, as well as from England.

Indies*, and the British settlements on the coast of Africa, under the same duties and regulations as those to which the English merchants were subject. Separate bills were introduced for these purposes, which passed without any difficulty. It was only observed, in a debate upon the last of them, by one of the members for the trading and manufacturing county of Lancaster, who, at the request of his constituents, had been active in opposing similar propositions in the two preceding sessions, " that formerly, when questions of commerce respecting Ireland had been in agitation, the several manufacturing towns of England had applied to parliament, and urged their situation, as an objection to the matters then under discussion; pleading, that in reliance on the good faith of parliament, they had put themselves into that situation, and that therefore it would be unjust to grant to Ireland, what must essentially affect their interest. The case now, he said, was much altered: it was no longer a question of commerce, but a question of great national importance; for which reason, the several places in England, likely to be affected by the present measures in favor of Ireland, had thought it decent and dutiful to remain silent, and to trust altogether to the wisdom and justice of parliament." This acquiescence of the English manufacturers was a decisive proof of the general impression which prevailed, relative to the distressed and critical state of Ireland.

The Irish parliament received these propositions of lord North, with strong expressions of gratitude; and passed bills with a view to give them full effect, as well as several other bills

* The Irish had not been permitted to import any articles directly from the West Indies. All the West Indian produce consumed in Ireland, passed through England.

CHAP. VI. 1785.

for the farther encouragement of their trade and manufactures.

In a subsequent part of this session, a bill passed the British parliament, for repealing the acts which prohibited the exportation of coin from England to Ireland, and the importation of foreign hops into Ireland, and which took off the drawback upon hops exported from Great Britain to Ireland; and this bill gave also to his majesty's subjects resident in Ireland, the privilege of being admitted into the Turkey company. Though these concessions were acknowledged as great benefits by the parliament of Ireland, they were not followed by any material improvement in the trade of that country. They were not perhaps calculated to be of immediate and general benefit; and the exertions of the Irish themselves were wanting to give them even that partially good effect, which they might, with care, and in time, have produced. "It should seem," says a contemporary writer, "as if the manufacturers of Ireland had conceived an opinion, that the restitution of commercial freedom would operate like a charm, and diffuse, in an instant, that general prosperity over the nation, which could only be the effect of a long course of frugal, attentive, and persevering industry. The fallacy of these sanguine expectations was soon apparent; and the evil, if not partly caused, was greatly aggravated, by the idleness of the lowest class of the people, and that neglect of the proper occupations of the better sort, which was the consequence of the general disposition to political speculations*." The distress of the manufacturing and laboring part of the community continued, and, gradually increasing,

* Dodsdley's Annual Register for 1786, supposed to have been written by Mr. Burke.

became so great in 1783, as to occasion considerable disturbances in Dublin; and a very liberal subscription was raised for those who could obtain no employment. But this being merely a temporary remedy, the Irish house of commons, on the 21st of October in that year, upon the motion of Mr. Gardiner, appointed a committee to take into consideration the state of the manufactures of the kingdom. The deliberations of this committee lasted several months; and the result will be noticed hereafter.

Soon after the volunteers had succeeded in removing some of the legal obstacles and impediments, by which Irish commerce had long been fettered, they began to aim at a redress of what they considered as political grievances. They declared, at their public assemblies, that the authority exercised by Great Britain over Ireland, was a gross usurpation—that the British parliament had no right to bind Ireland, in any case whatever—and that the appeals from the Irish courts of law to those in England, was an humiliating confession of superiority, which ought no longer to be endured. Meetings, at the instigation of the volunteers, were held in counties and corporate towns, at which resolutions to the same effect were passed; and every endeavor was used to excite jealousy and discontent among the people, who were taught to believe, that Ireland would never be happy and prosperous, till it was emancipated from its dependance upon England. These claims, asserted by 40,000 armed men, and supported by the general voice of the country, it was not thought prudent to resist; and accordingly in the years 1782 and 1783, acts were passed, as we have seen, by the British parliament, in which they renounced all legislative authority

over Ireland; and all appeals from the courts of law in Ireland to those in England, were prohibited in future. It may be remarked, that these acts, which made so great a change in the relative situation of England and Ireland, were supported by contending parties, who agreed upon scarcely any other important political point, by lord Rockingham, lord Shelburne, the duke of Portland, lord North, Mr. Pitt, and Mr. Fox. The events which had lately taken place, and the general disposition of the people in Ireland, were indeed such, as to force conviction upon the mind of every one, that it was impossible for England any longer to maintain that species of sovereignty, which she had hitherto exercised over her sister kingdom; and all the enlightened statesmen of the age, not only admitted the necessity of these measures, but also concurred in opinion, that the two countries might be placed upon an equal footing, with respect to legislation and the administration of justice, without any injury or danger to the general interests of the empire. It was, on the part of England, the renunciation of a proud superiority, and not the loss of a national benefit; it was the relinquishment of an unimportant distinction, and not the surrender of a valuable privilege. Acts were passed by the Irish parliament, to give full effect to those which had been passed in England; and also other acts, to limit the mutiny bill (which was perpetual) to two years, and to render the judges independent of the crown.

But even this establishment of complete political independence, did not restore contentment or tranquillity to Ireland; nor did the conclusion of peace induce the volunteers to disband. They continued their meetings; and the success which

had hitherto attended their exertions, emboldened them to urge new claims, in the most exceptionable way, and to be more factious and violent in their speeches and resolutions. Their efforts were now principally directed to obtain a reform of parliament. The first public and direct mention of this subject seems to have been on the first of July 1783, at a meeting of the delegates of 45 volunteer corps at Lisburne, at which it was agreed to invite the concurrence of other corps; and a committee was appointed to correspond with the most distinguished persons in England, who were known to be friendly to parliamentary reform. Among others, a letter was addressed to Mr. Pitt, to which he returned no answer. On the 8th of September, a meeting of delegates from the volunteer corps of the whole province of Ulster, was held at Dungannon; and after a long consultation, it was proposed, that delegates from all the volunteer corps of all the four provinces, should assemble at Dublin, on the 10th of November, for the purpose of considering the best means of promoting a reform in the parliamentary representation. This proposal was generally approved by the volunteers of the other provinces; and in consequence, what might justly be denominated a national convention of military delegates, a deliberative assembly of armed political reformers, took place in the metropolis, under the eye of the executive government. After the election of a president, the appointment of a committee, to prepare a plan of reform, and a variety of discussions, several resolutions were passed, on the 28th of November, in which it was declared, that the right of voting for members of parliament, ought to be extended in a certain specified manner, and that the duration of parliaments ought to be limited to

CHAP. VI. 1785.

three instead of seven years. Mr. Flood was selected as the fittest person to bring this business before the Irish house of commons; and on the following day, without any previous explanation, he moved, to bring in "a bill for the more equal representation of the people in parliament." This motion was received with evident marks of disapprobation; and Mr. Yelverton, the attorney general, who had himself originally belonged to a corps of volunteers, but was now, with many other respectable persons, convinced, that their proceedings were tending to the subversion of all order and government, and that it was become absolutely necessary to resist them, immediately rose, and said, "That the question did not deserve to be discussed, but that it ought to be regarded as an insult to the house. If the bill originated, as it was notorious it did, with a body of armed men, they should decidedly set their faces against receiving it. They did not sit there to receive propositions at the point of the bayonet. He entertained an extreme reverence for the volunteers, who had conferred the most essential services upon their country. But when they formed themselves into a political body, to discuss the modes of reforming parliament, and to regulate the affairs of the nation; when by the rude employment of arms, they would probe the wounds of the constitution, he would set himself against them at once. The question now was, whether the national convention, or the parliament of Ireland, were to legislate for that country. What was it they had so lately seen? Armed men drawn up in files in the streets, in order to open a path for other armed men, repairing, in fastidious parade, to a general assembly, and displaying all the ostentation of a real

parliament. Would they submit to this? Was it decent for parliament to enter into a sort of compromise with this congress? Were the members of that house free in their deliberations, while this military congress was sitting? No; it was necessary they should say to the volunteers, You have obtained constitution and commerce; and now, instead of dictating to the legislature of the kingdom, go to your own homes, change your attire, and turn your swords into instruments of agriculture." These spirited and patriotic sentiments were warmly applauded; and, after a long debate, the motion was negatived by 157 to 77. The house, to mark more strongly their disapprobation of the manner in which this attempt was made, and to assert their own dignity and authority, immediately passed a resolution, moved by Mr. Yelverton, and carried by a great majority, "That it was now necessary to declare, that this house will support the rights and privileges of parliament against all encroachments." Nor did they stop here: Mr. Conolly, who had also formerly been a member of a corps of volunteers, moved, "That an address should be presented to his majesty, to express the happiness they enjoyed under the established government; and to assure him of their determination to support the present constitution, with their lives and fortunes." To give this address the greater weight, the concurrence of the house of lords was requested, which was granted on the first of December.

This brief narrative shews the distressed and unquiet situation of Ireland, when Mr. Pitt entered into office; and events which soon afterwards took place, rendered that situation still more formidable and alarming. The unequivocal condemna-

tion by the house of commons, at the end of November 1783, of the principles upon which the volunteers were then acting, did not induce them to desist. The convention, indeed, adjourned soon after; but the delegates, before they separated, engaged to exert themselves individually in their respective neighborhoods, to procure petitions to the house of commons, in favor of a parliamentary reform. About thirty were presented, and afforded Mr. Flood a pretence for renewing his motion on the 13th of the following March. The bill was allowed to be brought in; but it was rejected upon the second reading, by a majority of 159 to 85.

On the 31st of March, Mr. Gardiner, in consequence of the report from the committee appointed upon his motion, in the preceding October, stated, that the importation of foreign (meaning English) articles, by preventing the consumption of their own manufactures, was the cause of the distress of the Irish manufacturers.—As a radical cure to this evil, he proposed, that all such foreign articles should be subjected to a heavy duty upon importation; and as the first step in his system, he moved, that a duty of 2*s.* 6*d.* per yard should be imposed upon all drapery imported into that kingdom.—It was contended, on the other hand, that it would be very unwise to act upon this principle of protecting duties, as they were called; since, in that case, it must be expected, that the British legislature would retaliate, by laying a tax upon Irish linens, which were at present annually imported into England, to the value of 1,500,000*l.* This immense trade would, therefore, be endangered for the sake of promoting the woollen manufactures, the value of which did not exceed 50,000*l.* a year.—

Mr. Gardiner's motion was on this ground rejected by 116 to 36, which so incensed the populace, who had for some time been clamorous for these protecting duties, that five days afterwards, a large body of riotous persons forced their way into the gallery and body of the house of commons, while it was sitting, and insulted the members in the grossest manner, reproaching them with having sold themselves to Great Britain, and calling upon them to distribute among the distressed manufacturers, a part of the hire of their iniquity. The guards were sent for, and two of the ringleaders were committed to prison. The house afterwards passed a censure upon Mr. Thomas Green, the lord mayor, for not having taken any step to prevent the tumults, though he had received sufficient notice for that purpose; and for not acting with the caution and prudence, that became a chief magistrate. Meetings of the inhabitants of Dublin were held, at which the most factious and mischievous resolutions were passed; and government received intelligence of a conspiracy to murder no less than seven members of the house of commons. The press was resorted to by the discontented and disaffected, as the means of inflaming the minds of the common people; and the "Volunteer's Journal," in particular, teemed with exhortations and incitements to assassination. In consequence of this daring licentiousness in the newspapers, a bill was introduced by Mr. Foster, in April 1784, "for securing the liberty of the press, by preventing the publication of libels." By this bill, which passed without any difficulty, the real printer and proprietor of every newspaper was compelled to make an affidavit of his name and place of residence, to be lodged in the stamp-office,—which enabled government to know, and bring to justice, the publisher of

every seditious and libellous paragraph; and the vendors of unstamped papers were compelled to declare from whom they received them. Such was the disturbed state of Dublin, arising from the distress of the manufacturers, the proceedings of the reformers, and the plots of assassins, that though the garrison consisted of three thousand infantry, and a regiment of horse, it was deemed necessary to detain three regiments, which had been ordered to the East Indies, and to send for additional troops from England.

The duke of Rutland was appointed lord lieutenant, in February; and, from the moment of his arrival in Ireland, at the end of that month, no important step was taken without Mr. Pitt's advice and direction. Though Mr. Pitt had the satisfaction of learning, that the firm and vigorous conduct of the Irish ministers, adopted by his suggestion and encouragement, and the precautions which he had recommended, had, for the present, in some degree, checked the spirit of innovation and turbulence, which threatened the most immediate and most ruinous consequences; yet he was aware, that nothing but a fundamental change in the commercial relation between the two kingdoms, could afford effectual relief, and render Ireland permanently tranquil and prosperous. Strong, however, as this impression was upon his mind, and critical as he believed the situation of that country to be, it was absolutely impossible for him, while the British parliament was sitting, to find leisure for the arrangement of so complicated and difficult a business. But soon after the prorogation took place, two gentlemen in high stations in Ireland*, who were well acquainted with its trade and manufactures,

* Mr. Foster, chancellor of the exchequer and Mr. Beresford, first commissioner of the revenue.

came over to England; and a considerable part of Mr. Pitt's time, in the summer and autumn, was occupied in deliberating with them, and with the most intelligent persons of the same description in this country, upon a new plan of commercial intercourse between the two kingdoms. Notice was afterwards given to every trading and manufacturing town, that such a plan was in contemplation; and a committee of privy counsellors was appointed to receive information and suggestions from merchants and manufacturers, relative to the different branches in which they were themselves engaged, with whom Mr. Pitt had also frequent private conferences, as the best means of obtaining a minute and practical knowledge of every article of commerce, foreign and domestic; and their astonishment was greatly excited by the acuteness and intelligence of his inquiries and observations.

The result of these consultations was brought before the Irish house of commons, by Mr. Orde, secretary to the lord lieutenant, on the 7th of February 1785; and four days afterwards, eleven resolutions were passed as the basis of the proposed system. The house of lords, in that kingdom, concurred in these resolutions on the 16th, and they were immediately transmitted to his majesty, with a joint address*. On the 22d, Mr. Pitt, by the king's command, presented them to the British house of commons; and, after they were read, he

* In the house of commons there were three divisions: the first upon a question of delay, in which the numbers were 156 and 33; the second upon an amendment moved by Mr. Gardiner, which was negatived by a majority of 178 to 33; and the third was upon the address to the king, in which the minority consisted of only two. In the house of lords there was no division.

CHAP. VI. 1785.

observed, that he was persuaded, there was not a man in the house, of whatever party or description, however attached or connected, who would not agree, that the settling of the commercial intercourse between the two countries, upon a firm, liberal, and permanent basis, by which an end might be for ever put to jealousies and clamor, by which all future pretexts to discontent might be removed, and by which the surest foundations of future opulence and energy might be laid, was one of the most important topics which could be agitated in parliament, and one of the most desirable objects they could accomplish. It was not his present intention, he said, to enter into the detail of the resolutions, which the house had just heard, and which he acknowledged he had been concerned in preparing; but to confine himself to an exposition of the general principles, on which they were founded: nor should he call upon the house to come to any decision, till sufficient time had been allowed for the examination of all the papers, which had been already, or which might hereafter be, laid on the table.

He desired to recal to the attention of the house, what had been, and what was, the relative situation of the two countries. It would be recollected, that from the revolution, to a period within the memory of every man who heard him, the system had been that of debarring Ireland from the enjoyment and use of her own resources; and to make her completely subservient to the interests and opulence of this country, without suffering her to share in the bounties of nature, or profit by the skill of her citizens, and without enabling her to contribute to the common welfare and strength of the empire. Ireland was

excluded from every species of commerce—she was not allowed to send the produce of her own soil to foreign markets; and all correspondence with the British colonies had been prohibited to her, so that she could not obtain their commodities, but through the medium of Britain. This cruel and abominable restraint was as impolitic, as it was unjust and oppressive; for however instrumental it might be to the partial benefit of certain districts in this island, it promoted not the general prosperity and actual wealth of the British dominions, collectively considered. It counteracted the kindness of Providence, and suspended the industry and enterprize of man. Such was the system which had prevailed, and such the state of thraldom, in which Ireland had been kept for a period little short of a hundred years. A slight relaxation, indeed, took place in an early part of the present century; something more of the restrictive laws was abated in the reign of Geo. 2; but it was not until a time nearer to our own day, that the system was entirely exploded.

It was not to be expected, but that when Ireland, by the more enlarged policy of the present age, had acquired an independent legislature, she would instantly export her produce and manufactures to all the markets in the world. She did so; and this was not all. England, without any compact or bargain, generously admitted her to a share in the trade to her colonies. She gave her liberty to import directly, and to export to all the world, except to Britain, every species of colonial produce. Thus much was done some years ago; but to this moment, the intercourse between Great Britain and Ireland themselves, remained upon the old footing. New

CHAP. VI. 1785.

regulations had indeed been made, in some trivial points; but no considerable alteration had taken place, either in the exportation of British manufactures to Ireland, or in the importation of Irish manufactures into Britain. That, therefore, which had been done, was still viewed by the people of Ireland as insufficient; and clamors were excited, and suggestions circulated in Dublin and elsewhere, of putting duties on our produce and manufactures, for the purpose of preventing their importation, under the name of "protecting duties."

Having thus far abandoned the commercial domination, in which we had so long persevered; having so wisely and justly put the Irish into a state, in which they might cultivate, and profit from, the gifts of nature; and having secured to them the advantage of their skill and industry—having, in these respects, abolished one system, and established another; surely no one could wish the immediate communication between the two countries, in matters of trade, to continue exactly as it was. There were, he said, but two possible systems for countries situated in relation to one another, like Britain and Ireland. The one was, that of having the smaller completely subservient and subordinate to the greater—to make the smaller, as it were, an instrument of advantage to the greater, and to cause all her efforts to operate and conduce solely to that purpose. This system had been tried by Britain in regard to Ireland. The other was, a participation and community of benefits, upon a principle of equality and fairness, which, without tending to aggrandize the one, or depress the other, should seek the aggregate interests of the empire. Such a system of commercial equality, in which there was to be a com-

munity of benefits, demanded also a community of burdens; and it was this situation, in which he was anxious to place Great Britain and Ireland.

Mr. Pitt then proceeded to explain his plan for effecting this desirable and important purpose, as contained in the resolutions transmitted from Ireland, and which consisted of three general heads; First, it was proposed, that all foreign articles, which were now importable directly from other countries into Great Britain, should hereafter also be importable, under suitable provisions, into Great Britain, through the medium of Ireland. Secondly, that all articles, the produce or manufacture of Great Britain or Ireland, should be mutually importable into each other, under a proper regulation of countervailing duties, drawbacks, and bounties; thus would a complete participation of all the commercial and manufacturing advantages and privileges of every kind and description, enjoyed by England, be conceded to Ireland; and a perfect equality and reciprocity between the two kingdoms, be fully and finally established. Thirdly, it being considered reasonable, that Ireland, when admitted to this entire participation and community of benefits, should contribute to the expence of maintaining the colonies, and protecting the commerce of the empire; and that her contribution should be of such a nature as to keep pace with the gain derived from the new system, it was proposed, that the surplus of the hereditary revenue, above its present produce, should be appropriated towards the support of the naval force of the empire, in whatever manner the parliament of that kingdom should direct. The hereditary revenue, which now amounted to 656,000*l.* a year, almost totally

depended upon the trade and population of the country; and consequently, in whatever degree the trade and population of Ireland should be increased, she would pay a sum in proportion to that increase.

Having given this outline of the Irish propositions, as they were called, Mr. Pitt concluded, by moving the following preliminary resolution, "That it is the opinion of this house, that it is highly important to the general interests of the empire, that the commercial intercourse between Great Britain and Ireland should be finally adjusted; and that Ireland should be admitted to a permanent and irrevocable participation of the commercial advantages of this country, when the parliament of Ireland shall permanently and irrevocably secure an aid out of the surplus of the hereditary revenue of that kingdom, towards defraying the expence of protecting the general commerce of the empire in time of peace." Mr. Pitt proposed, that the consideration of this resolution should be deferred for a week, to give time to receive accounts and estimates; and he added, that if there should then appear any reason for farther delay, he should willingly consent to it.

It may be observed, that in all former commercial concessions to Ireland, no stipulation had been made for any return — there had uniformly been a gratuitous surrender of advantages, without providing for the slightest compensation. In this respect, Mr. Pitt's system differed from those of his predecessors. In fact, it could scarcely be said, that there was any system in what had hitherto been done for Ireland. Nothing had been granted upon the ground of substantial justice, and sound policy. Concessions were extorted, one

after another, from the British government, and were nothing more than temporary expedients, to obviate pressing difficulties, or to silence present complaints. No attempt had been made, by a fair, liberal, and comprehensive adjustment of commercial interests, to cut off all cause of discontent in Ireland; and, by establishing lasting harmony between the two countries, to unite and consolidate their efforts for the promotion of the prosperity and welfare of the empire at large. All former ministers had shrunk from the undertaking, as involving unsurmountable obstacles.

It was scarcely to be expected, that a plan, which opened the British market to the Irish, for every article of trade and manufactures, both foreign and domestic, should not excite apprehension and jealousy in the commercial part of the community in Great Britain; more especially, as the most active endeavors were used by the opponents and enemies of goverment, both in and out of parliament, to persuade the public, that the mercantile and manufacturing interests of Great Britain would be sacrificed to those of Ireland, by the proposed arrangement. The alarm became very general, almost every one fancying, that his own branch of trade would be ruined; and in consequence, numerous petitions against the measure, were presented to the house of commons. Two months were occupied in hearing counsel and examining witnesses; among whom were some of the principal merchants and manufacturers from every part of the kingdom; and the commissioners of customs and excise were also heard, as to the probable effect which the intended alterations would have upon the revenue. The most minute details were entered into;

and all possible pains taken to ascertain, in what manner every branch of trade, every species of manufacture, and every article of taxation, would be effected; and likewise, by what regulations any difficulty might be obviated, or any mischief, which was apprehended, might be prevented. Desultory conversations frequently arose in the course of the examinations; and those members, on both sides of the house, who had applied their thoughts to trade and manufactures, delivered their sentiments upon the points under immediate consideration. Never was subject more completely investigated—no part of it was left unexplored—a prodigious mass of evidence was collected, and a great variety of information obtained.

Mr. Pitt, after the fullest and most impartial attention to all the facts which had been stated, and to all the arguments which had been advanced, was convinced, that he might safely persevere in his plan, without danger to the commerce or revenue of this country. But though he was confirmed in the opinion that the principles, upon which the arrangement was founded, were just and wise, he perceived, that the inquiries which had been instituted, and the discussions which had taken place, had thrown new light upon several points, which would enable him to render his plan more complete, and better suited to the accomplishment of its object. He willingly availed himself of this information and assistance; and, on the 12th of May, he submitted to the house, the whole system, matured and improved, in twenty resolutions, including the eleven transmitted from Ireland, into which he introduced various of modifications and restrictions. Of the additional resolutions, some were only explanatory of, and supplemental to, the

original ones; but the others related to subjects entirely new. These latter, contained provisions, that all the navigation laws, which were then, or might hereafter be, in force in Great Britain, should be enacted by the legislature of Ireland; that no West Indian merchandizes, except the produce of our own colonies, should be imported into Ireland; and that Ireland should not be allowed to trade to the East Indies, so long as the charter of the English East India company should continue. There were also regulations respecting patents, the copy-right in books, and the right of fishing upon the coasts of the British dominions. He explained the nature and tendency of the whole series of resolutions; and particularly dwelt upon those, which were now, for the first time, brought under the consideration of the house. He proved himself accurately acquainted with every branch of the trade and manufactures of both kingdoms, and at the same time displayed the most enlarged and comprehensive views of the general principles of commerce, and of the means by which it might be encouraged and extended, under the relative circumstances of England and Ireland. Towards the end of his speech, he addressed the house, in the most earnest manner, entreating them to reflect upon the momentous nature of the business then before them;—that its object was to conciliate a difference between this and our sister kindom, which, though at present confined to secret repinings and disgusts, to jealousies, and to a war of interests and of passions, might perhaps, in time, proceed to a length, which he shuddered to think of, and could not venture to express; that it tended to enrich one part of the empire, without

CHAP. VI. 1785. impoverishing the other, while it gave strength to both; that, like Mercy, the favorite attribute of Heaven,

" It is twice blessed;
" It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes;"

that after the severe calamities, under which this country had so long labored, that after the heavy loss which she had sustained from the recent division of her dominions, there ought to be no object more impressive on the feelings of the house, than to endeavor to preserve from farther dismemberment and diminution, what yet remained of our reduced and shattered empire, and to unite and connect Great Britain and Ireland, now the only considerable members left, in the bond of mutual affection, mutual kindness, and reciprocity of interests. He called upon those gentlemen, who had enjoyed a share at different periods in the government of Ireland, to declare, from their local knowledge, whether the time was not now past, when temporary expedients, when lenitives calculated merely for the purpose of deadening the immediate sense of pain, without even approaching the seat of the distemper, could be administered with safety? Whether such measures could silence the demands, which the Irish, with a loud united voice, were at this moment making on the justice, the wisdom, and the humanity of the nation?

He apologized for having troubled the house so long upon a subject which had already occupied much of their attention; declaring, that, among all the objects of his political life, this was, in his opinion, the most important he had ever engaged

in; nor did he imagine he should ever meet another, which would call forth all his public exertions, and rouse every feeling of his heart, in so forcible a manner, as the present had done—a question, in which, he verily believed, was involved every prospect which still remained to this country, of again lifting up her head to that height and eminence, which she once possessed among nations; and of giving to her commerce, her public credit and her resources, that spring and vivacity, which she experienced at the conclusion of the war before the last; which was now so obviously returning, and which, he trusted, she would never be found to want, so long as liberality, public spirit, and disinterestedness held their place in that house. He concluded, by moving the first resolution.

A very long debate ensued, in which lord North moved for an immediate adjournment, asserting, that more time was required for the consideration of this extensive and important business. The question of adjournment was lost by a majority of 281 to 155, and the first resolution was passed. To the second resolution, Mr. Pelham moved an amendment, which was rejected, by a majority of 249, to 125; and the resolution, as proposed by Mr. Pitt, was passed, at six o'clock in the morning, after which the house adjourned.

In this, and in the other debates which took place upon the remaining resolutions, numerous objections were urged: It was stated, that the system must necessarily be detrimental to the commerce and manufactures of Great Britain, as the comparatively low price of labor in Ireland, would enable the Irish to sell the same articles at a less price than that at which

the English could afford them; that many foreign articles would be smuggled into Ireland, and from thence imported into Great Britain, which would be injurious to the revenue; that the requiring the parliament of Ireland to adopt the present and all future navigation laws, which might be in force in Great Britain, was inconsistent with the legislative independence of Ireland, and a resumption of that authority, which had been formally renounced; and that Great Britain would derive no pecuniary benefit from this plan, as it was highly improbable, that the hereditary revenue of Ireland should produce any surplus above the stipulated sum. These objections, however, were considered either as unfounded, or as of very little weight, when put in competition with the great and important advantages expected from the plan.

All the resolutions, most of which were warmly debated, passed the house of commons, by large majorities; and on the 31st of May, they were carried up to the house of lords. There, also, counsel were heard, and witnesses examined, in consequence of petitions; but after several debates, the resolutions were passed by a great majority, with some immaterial amendments. The resolutions, thus amended, were sent back to the house of commons; and Mr. Pitt moved, that they should be laid before his majesty, for the purpose of being transmitted to Ireland, with an address, which he then proposed. To this the house agreed, at the end of a long debate; and the concurrence of the house of lords was obtained a few days afterwards, in both cases, without any division. The following was the joint address of the two houses, which was presented to his majesty on the 29th of July, and which

contained a clear and accurate statement of the whole system, as it then stood: CHAP. VI. 1785.

" Most gracious Sovereign,

" We your majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the lords spiritual and temporal, and commons, of Great Britain, in parliament assembled, have taken into our most serious consideration, the important subject of the commercial intercourse between Great Britain and Ireland, recommended in your majesty's speech at the opening of the present session, and the resolutions of the two houses of the parliament in Ireland, which were laid before us, by your majesty's command, on the 22d of February last.

" After a long and careful investigation of the various questions necessarily arising out of this comprehensive subject, we have come to the several resolutions, which we now humbly present to your majesty, and which, we trust, will form the basis of an advantageous and permanent commercial settlement between your majesty's kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland.

" We have proceeded on the foundation of the resolutions of the parliament of Ireland; but in considering so extensive an arrangement, we have found it necessary to introduce some modifications and exceptions; and we have added such regulations and conditions as appeared to us indispensably necessary for establishing the proposed agreement on just and equitable principles, and for securing to both countries, those commercial advantages, to an equal enjoyment of which they are in future to be entitled.

CHAP. VI. 1785.

"Your majesty's subjects in Ireland, being secured, in a full and lasting participation of the trade with the British colonies, must, we are persuaded, acknowledge the justice of their continuing to enjoy it on the same terms with your majesty's subjects in Great Britain.

"And it is, we conceive, equally manifest, that as the ships and mariners of Ireland are to continue, in all time to come, to enjoy the same privileges with those of Great Britain, the same provision should be adopted in Ireland, as may be found necessary in this country, for securing those advantages exclusively to the subjects of the empire. This object is essentially connected with the maritime strength of your majesty's dominions, and consequently with the safety and prosperity both of Great Britain and Ireland.

"We therefore deem it indispensable, that these points should be secured, as conditions necessary to the existence and duration of the agreement between the two countries; they can only be carried into effect by laws to be passed in the parliament of Ireland; which is alone competent to bind your majesty's subjects in that kingdom, and whose legislative rights we shall ever hold as sacred as our own.

"It remains for the parliament of Ireland to judge, according to their wisdom and discretion, of these conditions, as well as of every other part of the settlement proposed to be established by mutual consent.

"Our purpose in these resolutions, is, to promote alike the commercial interests of your majesty's subjects in both countries; and we are persuaded, that the common prosperity of the two kingdoms will be thereby greatly advanced; the

subjects of each will in future apply themselves to those branches of commerce, which they can exercise with most advantage; and the wealth so diffused through every part, will operate as a general benefit to the whole.

"We have thus far performed our part in this important business; and we trust, that in the whole of its progress, reciprocal interests and mutual affection will ensure that spirit of union, so essentially necessary to the great end which the two countries have equally in view.

"In this persuasion, we look forward with confidence to the final completion of a measure, which, while it tends to perpetuate harmony and friendship between the two kingdoms, must, by augmenting their resources, uniting their efforts, and consolidating their strength, afford your majesty the surest means of establishing on a lasting foundation, the safety, prosperity, and glory of the empire."

On the 2d of August, Mr. Pitt presented to the house, a bill founded upon these resolutions, "for finally regulating the intercourse and commerce between Great Britain and Ireland, on permanent and equitable principles, for the mutual benefit of both kingdoms." It was ordered to be printed; and the house, by his majesty's command, then adjourned to the 27th of October, by which time it was hoped, that the Irish parliament would have passed a bill, for carrying, on their part, the proposed system into effect.

This hope, however, was disappointed. The eleven original resolutions had passed both houses of the Irish parliament almost unanimously, and they were very generally approved in

CHAP. VI. 1785.

the country; but through the exertions of party-spirit, and the arts of designing men, so strong a prejudice was excited in Ireland, against the alterations and additions made by the British parliament, that even before the twenty resolutions reached that kingdom, numerous petitions were presented against them to the house of commons, and several members declared their determination to oppose them. The provision respecting the navigation laws, was considered in Ireland still more strongly than in England, as an infringement of its legislative independence, although it was impossible that Great Britain should not stipulate for the preservation of laws, which were the source both of her commercial opulence and of her naval power; and although it had been unequivocally acknowledged in the debates of the English parliament, and was expressly asserted in the address to the king, that "the parliament of Ireland was alone competent to make laws binding upon his majesty's subjects in that kingdom." The appropriation of the surplus of the hereditary revenue, and the prohibition of trade to the East Indies, were reprobated, as reducing the country to little less than a state of slavery; although that surplus, granted in return for the most substantial advantages, was to be applied to the support of the naval force of the empire, under the direction of the Irish parliament itself; and the prohibition of trade to the East Indies, only placed the Irish in precisely the same state, in which all the English were, except the East India company, and was indispensably necessary for the preservation of public faith and chartered rights. It is to be observed too, that Mr. Pitt had declared it to be his intention to empower the company to take such

part of their outward bound cargo as they might find convenient, in the ports of Ireland; and likewise to import directly into Ireland, from the East Indies, such articles of the produce of that country, as they might think proper; which would have been important provisions in favor of Ireland, and ought to have prevented any dissatisfaction on the ground of the East Indian trade. But unfortunately, the Irish at this moment were taught to consider every thing which originated in England as an object of jealousy and mistrust, and as concealing hostile intentions under the guise and semblance of friendship. It is also to be remembered, that there always existed in Ireland, a large body of men, who, from various causes, but chiefly from hostility to the protestant ascendancy, were anxious to produce a separation between the two kingdoms, and who never failed to encourage and foment any discontent which might arise with respect to the conduct of Great Britain.

On the 12th of August, Mr. Orde brought the plan before the Irish house of commons; and after a speech explanatory of the grounds upon which the parliament in England had altered, and added to, the original resolutions, he moved for a bill similar to that which Mr. Pitt had introduced into the British house of commons. The motion, after a long and violent debate, which lasted till nine o'clock in the morning, was carried by only 128 to 107; which small majority induced Mr. Orde, a few days afterwards, when he presented the bill, and obtained leave to have it printed, to inform the house, that it was not his intention to proceed any farther with the business in the present session. He was, he said, desirous of giving leisure, both to parliament and to the public, to exa-

mine and to understand the plan ; and he trusted, that when the present ferment should have subsided, and the system should be calmly and dispassionately considered, free from the errors of misrepresented facts, and the delusion of sophistical reasoning, it would be found eminently calculated to promote the prosperity of Ireland, and in no degree violating the privileges she now enjoyed: he added, that when he should have reason to think, that such a conviction had taken place, he should again call the attention of the house to the subject.

The failure of this plan was a most severe mortification to Mr. Pitt. He had labored unremittingly for nearly twelve months, to make it as perfect and as unexceptionable as its extensive and complicated nature would allow; and he was satisfied that it would have proved highly conducive to the most important interests of Ireland, as well as to the general welfare of the empire. He thought it, however, wise in the Irish government to yield to the present clamor, and to wait for a change of sentiment, to which he looked forward, at no distant period, with the utmost confidence *.

There being now no occasion for the British parliament to meet on the 27th of October, it was prorogued by commission, without a speech from the throne.

DURING the progress of this unsuccessful attempt to improve the trade and manufactures of Ireland, the volunteers were

* Some communication passed in the summer of 1787, between Mr. Pitt and the Irish government, relative to the revival of this plan, with such alterations as might be thought expedient, but it was determined not to make the attempt. It may be a question, whether the adoption of this plan would not have prevented the continuance and increase of that discontent, and of those distresses, which at length produced open rebellion in Ireland.

exerting all their influence to excite in the nation, a spirit of disaffection and hostility to Great Britain, which must have contributed in no small degree, to render the commercial propositions unpopular, the obvious tendency of which was to establish a more intimate and beneficial connection between the two kingdoms. A reform of parliament continued to be their professed object; and after the rejection of Mr. Flood's bill, they had recourse to a most unconstitutional and dangerous expedient. On the 7th of June 1784, they called a general meeting of the citizens of Dublin, who passed a variety of resolutions; in which, among other things, they asserted, that the people had an unalienable right to correct any abuses which had crept into the representation, and that the existing house of commons was notoriously venal and corrupt: they farther agreed, that an address should be circulated throughout the kingdom, for the purpose of stimulating the body of the people to a general and zealous co-operation to accomplish a reform in the representation; and also, that a petition should be presented to his majesty, praying for the dissolution of the present parliament. This address to the people, contained a detailed account of the various hardships, under which the Irish had long labored, and attributed them to the defects of their representation in parliament: it stated, that all the endeavors, which had hitherto been exerted to obtain a reform, had failed; and therefore, they called upon their fellow-subjects to unite with them, in adopting some more efficacious mode of application; and with that view they proposed, "that five persons should be elected from each county, city, and considerable town, to meet in Dublin, on the 25th of October, in national

congress, to deliberate, digest, and determine on such measures, as may seem to them most conducive to re-establish the constitution on a pure and permanent basis, and secure to the inhabitants of this kingdom, peace, liberty, and safety." This address was farther remarkable for recommending, that the roman catholics should be admitted to vote at the election of members of parliament. The petition to the king, after complaining of the inadequate state of representation, the long duration of parliaments, the unconstitutional conduct of administration, and the arbitrary proceedings of the house of commons, in rejecting the petitions of the people, concluded with a request, that his majesty would be pleased to dissolve parliament. They applied to the lord lieutenant (the duke of Rutland,) to convey this petition to the king; and his excellency informed them, that though it was his duty to convey their petition to his majesty, he should be under the necessity of accompanying it with expressions of his entire disapprobation, as "it contained unjust and indecent reflections upon the laws and parliament of Ireland, and tended to foment fatal dissensions among the people."

In the following month, a petition of nearly the same tenor was sent by the inhabitants of Belfast to Mr. Pitt, which they requested him to present to his majesty; and in their letter, they alluded to his sentiments and exertions in favor of parliamentary reform. Mr. Pitt, in his answer, informed them, "That he had undoubtedly been, and still continued, a zealous friend to a reform in parliament; but that he must beg leave to say, that he had been so on grounds very different from those adopted in their petition: that what was there proposed, he

considered as tending to produce still greater evils than any of those, which the friends of reform were desirous to remedy." CHAP. VI. 1785.

The sheriffs for the city of Dublin had, by public advertisement, summoned a meeting of the inhabitants on the 20th of September, for the election of five delegates to represent them in a national congress. A few days before the meeting was to take place, the attorney general informed the sheriffs, that by this act they had been guilty of a violation of the laws; and that, if they persevered, it was his intention to prosecute them in the king's bench. On the appointed day, one of the sheriffs read the attorney general's letter, and in consequence of it, dissolved the meeting, without allowing them to elect any delegates. Application was afterwards made to the new sheriffs, who entered upon their office on the 29th of September, to call a meeting on the 11th of October, for the election of delegates; but they declined all interference, and a meeting took place without their authority. This meeting, besides electing delegates, passed several strong resolutions, declaratory of their "sacred and imprescriptible right to assemble themselves for the redress of grievances;" and affirming, that "all attempts to interrupt these constitutional meetings, were to be regarded as an alarming encroachment upon the liberties of the people, and a direct violation of magna charta and the bill of rights;" and announcing their determination to "animate and protect, by every effort in their power, those of their countrymen, who, in these disastrous conjunctures, might become the victims of ministerial persecution,

for having vindicated and supported, by constitutional means, the privileges of the nation."

On the other hand, a meeting, legally summoned, of the lord mayor, sheriffs, and freemen of Dublin; was held on the 16th of October, at which they voted an address to the lord lieutenant, expressive of their "extreme grief, for the violence which had long reigned among the people, and of their lasting gratitude for the exertions that had repressed the disorders, by which the kingdom was disgraced. They referred themselves entirely to his good offices with the sovereign, to procure to Ireland a more equal representation of the people; and the permanent establishment of a commerce productive of advantages to the two kingdoms, and strengthening the links by which Ireland was united to Great Britain. Full of the most unshaken attachment to the principles of the constitution, they warmly approved the conduct, which his excellency had opposed to dangerous innovations; and they engaged to defend, with their whole power, and by every constitutional method, the protestant establishment against any attacks, by which it might be assailed." And a few months afterwards, they voted an address to the king, in which they said, that "they might justly be deemed insensible to the blessings they had derived under his majesty's auspices, if they omitted that seasonable occasion of declaring their rooted abhorrence of every attempt to create unjust and dangerous discontents, tending to subvert the constitution, in church and state; they rejected, with indignation, the interference of any body of men, unknown to the constitution; and they were resolved to

suffer no assumed authority to dictate to the legislature of the land." This address was signed by 21 peers, and 1,121 commoners.

In the mean time, the attorney general proceeded by attachment against Mr. Reilly, high sheriff of the county of Dublin, who had called a meeting of freeholders for the election of delegates, presided at it, and signed the resolutions; and the court of king's bench, having pronounced both the meeting and the resolutions illegal, punished Mr. Reilly, by a fine of five marks, and imprisonment for one week. Similar punishments were inflicted upon other magistrates, who were guilty of the same offence, and also upon the printers and publishers of newspapers, in which these illegal resolutions were inserted.

The congress met on the 25th of October, but very few delegates being present*, after sitting three days, and passing some resolutions, they adjourned to the 20th of the following January, when the delegates from twenty-seven counties, and from several cities and towns, assembled to the number of about two hundred. After sitting till the 4th of February, they adjourned to the 20th of April, on which day they declared their then meeting to be final. They came to several resolutions, relative to the necessity of a more equal representation in parliament, and to the propriety of another application to the house of commons; and their last act was, the publication of a brief address to the people of Ireland; in which they observed, "that if the abuse

* Mr. Orde informed Mr. Pitt, that only 36 attended, of whom Mr. Flood was one, most of the others being persons of no importance, and of infamous character.

of former parliaments did not inspire a distrust of those which were to come; if the venerable opinion of those illustrious men, who were now no more, and the assistance of those whose present labours co-operated with them in the same pursuit, had no influence to awaken their fears, to animate their efforts, and to invigorate their hopes; this, and every other endeavor must fall into oblivion; and they would shortly repose in indolent acquiescence, under such a representation, as would gall themselves and their posterity with encreasing taxation and oppression."

The small attendance of delegates, the short sittings of congress, and its speedy dissolution, were caused by the late spirited exertions of government; and the desponding language in the final address of congress, is to be ascribed to the general reprobation, by all sober-minded persons, of the recent proceedings of the advocates for parliamentary reform; and to the difference of opinion which had arisen among themselves, and created considerable disunion, relative to the important point of admitting roman catholics to the right of suffrage. Lord Charlemont, who was at the head of the volunteers, and an avowed friend of reform, declared against the grant of that right, for which he received the thanks of the corporation of Dublin, in October 1784.

It was determined, that Mr. Flood should not introduce his bill a second time, till the fate of Mr. Pitt's motion, upon the same subject in the British house of commons, should be known. We have seen that Mr. Pitt's motion was negatived, on the 18th of April; and on the 12th of May, Mr. Flood's bill, which had been introduced a few days before, was re-

jected, upon the second reading, by a majority of 112 to 60. Thus ended, for the present, the attempt in Ireland to obtain a parliamentary reform; but there still remained a discontented and turbulent spirit in the country, which in time, as we shall hereafter see, broke forth in disorders of the most serious nature.

CHAPTER THE SEVENTH:

1786.

Continental Affairs—Meeting of Parliament—The Duke of Richmond's Plan of Fortifications—Mr. Pitt's Plan for the Redemption of the National Debt—His other Finance Measures—Amendment of Mr. Pitt's India Bill—Commencement of Proceedings against Mr. Hastings—Prorogation of Parliament.

CHAP. VII. 1786.

THE prospect, in the beginning of the year 1785, of the immediate commencement of hostilities between Austria and the United States of Holland, was mentioned in the preceding chapter. This expected rupture, however, did not take place. The emperor, perceiving from the decisive language held by the court of Versailles, and the actual assembling of troops near Luxembourg, that if he prosecuted his claims by force of arms, the French would support the Dutch with all their power, thought it more prudent to settle the points in dispute, by means of negotiation. He required, indeed, as a previous step, that a formal apology should be made for the insult offered to his flag, by the seizure of the brigs upon the Scheldt; and the states, not hesitating to gratify his pride in this instance, sent two of their nobles to Vienna for that purpose, in the month of July. This matter being adjusted, conferences were immediately opened between the Austrian and Dutch ambassadors, at Paris; and so really desirous were both parties of an amicable arrangement, that the preliminaries were signed on the 12th of September, and

the definitive treaty on the 8th of November, through the mediation, and under the guarantee, of the king of France.

By this treaty it was agreed, that the emperor should enjoy the sovereignty of the Scheldt from Antwerp to the county of Softingen; and that the sovereignty of the rest of the river from thence to the sea, together with the canals of the Sas, the Swin, and the mouths of the neighboring rivers, should continue to belong exclusively to the states general; that the states should demolish the forts of Kriuschans and Frederick Henry, and cede the territories to the emperor; and that they should also cede to him the forts of Lillo and Lickinshock, with their fortifications, having the liberty of previously withdrawing their artillery and ammunition; that the states general should pay to the emperor, 9½ millions of florins, in consideration of his renouncing all pretensions to Maestricht, and its territory; and half a million of florins, as an indemnification for the damages which his subjects had sustained by the inundations. There were also several articles relative to local rights and internal regulations, and one by which the contracting parties mutually renounced all farther claims upon each other. The emperor was unquestionably a gainer by this treaty; but throughout the transaction he gave proofs of that want of steadiness and decision, by which his character was strongly marked.

Mr. Pitt watched with attention the whole of these proceedings, but they never assumed a shape to make it necessary for the court of London to interfere. After the arrangement was settled, he received private intelligence, that of the ten millions of florins, paid by the Dutch to the emperor, four

CHAP. VII. 1786.

millions and a half were advanced by France, which his informant mentioned as a proof of the desire of the court of Versailles to preserve the peace of Europe; but, perhaps, it ought rather to be considered as the price of that ascendancy, which France was from this time allowed to exercise over the counsels of the states general; and which we may conclude, she was most anxious to obtain, as her finances were at this time by no means in a florishing condition. Two days indeed after the conclusion of the treaty between Austria and Holland, a defensive and offensive treaty between France and Holland was signed, by which those two countries entered into the closest alliance; each engaging to support and assist the other, with a certain specified number of men and ships, in case of attack by any third power; and an article being inserted, that any other power might be invited to join in the treaty, which was known to have reference to Spain, it was evident that France intended to make Holland a party in the family compact, and to pledge her to co-operate in promoting all the views of the house of Bourbon. This treaty, so contrary to the system pursued by the states general from the period of their first establishment, and so obviously dangerous to their independence and best interests, was a decisive proof of the great influence, already acquired by France over the states, to which the pecuniary accommodation just mentioned must have contributed, and was sufficient to awaken jealous apprehensions in the other powers of Europe. It appears, from the correspondence of our minister at the Hague, that one of the great objects which France had in view from this alliance, was, to induce Holland to encrease her naval force in the East

Indies, for the purpose of molesting our trade, and to be prepared to assist our enemies, and to attack our possessions, in that distant quarter of the world, if any opportunity should present itself; and accordingly, Mr. Pitt afterwards received intelligence, that in the course of the following summer, five Dutch frigates were sent to be stationed in different parts of the Indian seas.

It is very singular, that while the emperor was urging his claims with so much earnestness to the free navigation of the Scheldt, he was carrying on a secret negotiation, which, if it had succeeded, would have deprived him of all immediate interest in every thing connected with that river. The object of the negotiation alluded to, was, the exchange of the Netherlands for the electorate of Bavaria. This exchange would have been highly advantageous to the emperor, as it would have rendered his dominions contiguous, and have ensured to him a still greater preponderance in Germany, than he had hitherto enjoyed. But it is difficult to say, what could have been the inducement to the elector of Bavaria, who was at this time far advanced in age, infirm, and without children; unless, as was generally believed, he was tempted by the promise of raising the Netherlands into a kingdom, and of giving him the title of king of Austrasia. Such progress, however, was made in the treaty, that the empress of Russia, who was closely connected with the emperor, and probably acquainted with the proceedings from the first, requested the consent of the duke of Deux Ponts, the presumptive heir * of the electorate, which the duke refused to give; and applied to the king of Prussia for his

* He was nephew to the present elector.

protection and assistance, to prevent an agreement inconsistent with the provisions of the treaty of Teschen, of which he was guarantee. To this application, the king gave a favorable reply; being desirous of opposing any plan, which might tend to the aggrandizement of the house of Austria.

The negotiation now became generally known, and excited great alarm among the German states, who could not but consider the proposed consolidation and increase of the Austrian power as highly dangerous to their own independence. To give effect and encouragement to this general impression, the king of Prussia, the king of Great Britain, as elector of Hanover, and the elector of Saxony, in avowed reference to the pending negotiation, entered into a treaty of union and confederation, by which they bound themselves to maintain the indivisibility of the empire, the general rights of the Germanic body, and those of its individual members. To this treaty the duke of Deux Ponts, the margrave of Anspach, and other princes, afterwards acceded. The emperor, being thus convinced, that the exchange could not be accomplished, without the most determined resistance of all the German states, with his usual versatility, abandoned his design, and even denied that it had ever been in contemplation; asserting, that the negotiation between himself and the elector of Bavaria, had no farther object than the adjustment of the limits of their respective dominions. The empress of Russia was extremely displeased with this league of the German states, thinking it might impede her views with respect to herself and Austria; and went so far as to authorize count Woronzow, her minister at our court, to represent, that if the king of Great Britain did not

relinquish his alliance with Prussia and Saxony, she would enter into treaties which would not be agreeable to him. To this threat, no regard was paid.

It was not the practice of the king to consult his English ministers, relative to the affairs of his German dominions; and he entered into this league, which could not but be offensive to the emperor, without any communication with Mr. Pitt upon the subject. The acquisition of Bavaria, would have caused great accession of strength to the emperor, which might have proved fatal to the smaller states in Germany, but was perhaps desirable for England, in the present state of European politics, as it would have better enabled him to resist any ambitious project of France: upon this point, therefore, the interests of Great Britain and of Hanover seem to have been different. The conduct of France, during the dispute concerning the opening of the Scheldt, plainly shewed, that she considered any addition to the power of the house of Austria, as contrary to her interests; but it appears, from intelligence privately received by Mr. Pitt, that it had been in contemplation to endeavor to gain her assent to the proposed exchange of Bavaria for the Netherlands, by the offer of Namur and Luxembourg. She might also have been tempted to acquiesce in this arrangement, by another consideration, that the king of Austrasia, having no other dominions but the Netherlands, must have been, comparatively, a weak power, and, consequently, very much dependent upon France.

PARLIAMENT met on the 24th of January 1786; and the

king, in his speech from the throne, informed the two houses, that the dispute, which, at the beginning of the last year, threatened an interruption to the tranquillity of Europe, had been brought to an amicable conclusion; and that he continued to receive from foreign powers, the strongest assurances of their friendly disposition towards Great Britain. His majesty also informed them, that the resolutions which they had laid before him, as the basis of an adjustment of the commercial intercourse between this country and Ireland, had been communicated to the parliament of that kingdom; but that no effectual step had hitherto been taken thereupon, which would enable them to make any farther progress in that salutary work. After mentioning the growing blessings of peace, experienced by his subjects, in the extension of trade, the improvement of the revenue, and the increase of public credit, and his own earnest wish to enforce economy in every department, he recommended to the house of commons, the establishment of a fixed plan for the reduction of the national debt; a measure, which, he trusted, the florishing state of the revenue would enable them to effect, with little addition to the public burdens; and he concluded with saying, that the vigor and resources of the country, so fully manifested in its present situation, would encourage parliament in continuing to give their utmost attention to every subject of national concern, particularly to the consideration of such measures as might be necessary, in order to give farther security to the revenue, and to promote and extend, as far as possible, the trade and general industry of his subjects.

After the address had been moved and seconded in the usual

form, and lord Surry had said a few words, Mr. Fox observed, that of all the speeches at the opening of a session of parliament, he had ever heard, or read of in history, he did not remember one, which was so cautiously worded, or which afforded so little ground of objection, as that which had just been delivered by his majesty. He rose, therefore, to speak to what was out of it, rather than to what was in it, to that which, perhaps, ought to have been there, rather than to what was there. He said, that the extension of trade, the florishing state of the revenue, and the increase of public credit, were circumstances, in which every one must rejoice: he asserted, that he had always expected there would be some surplus, and he would not be so uncandid, as not to acknowledge, that the surplus, whatever it might prove to be, was in part owing to the success of some of the measures of the present administration. He then desired to know, as he could not collect it from the speech, whether the resolutions, designed as a basis of commercial intercourse with Ireland, were entirely abandoned, or whether they were to be revived at some future period: he reminded the house, that Mr. Pitt, when the subject was first started, in some of the most vehement strains of his all-powerful eloquence, had condemned lord North for his temporizing concessions to Ireland, and for not having made an equitable and final settlement: he (Mr. Pitt) had then declared, that it was impossible for matters to remain as they were; and now the king's speech seemed to intimate, that they must remain as they were: it was, therefore, necessary, that the parliament and the public should clearly know what was really intended. He advised Mr. Pitt never again to attempt

CHAP. VII. 1786.

to carry a measure, so "detestable in the eyes of the manufacturers of Great Britain and Ireland;" and he dwelt for a considerable time upon the mischiefs, which, as he said, the agitation of the question had already produced in both countries, and upon the hardships and oppressions under which Ireland was groaning. He complained, that the speech confined itself to general and vague expressions respecting the tranquillity of Europe, and the disposition of foreign powers; at the same time he was aware, that not being a minister, he was at liberty to speak of the political transactions of the continent, in a manner in which it would be highly imprudent for his majesty's ministers to express themselves. He represented the treaty between France and Holland, though he believed it to be impolitic on the part of Holland, as unfavorable to this country; inasmuch as it combined three * of the most powerful maritime states of Europe in a confederacy against Great Britain: and after censuring ministers for not exerting themselves to prevent it, he recommended to them, with a view to counteract its mischievous tendency and effect, a close and intimate alliance with the court of Petersburgh †. He expressed great satisfaction at having understood, that we were likely to renew a treaty of commerce with Russia, as commercial treaties between two countries had always a great degree of influence upon their politics. He said, that the emperor of Germany, the only power France could fear by

* Mr. Fox considered it certain, that Spain would accede to this treaty: Spain, however, did not accede to it.

† Mr. Fox knew that at this moment ministers were endeavoring to form an alliance with the empress of Russia.

land in case of war, was offended, and his feelings rendered adverse to Great Britain, by the treaty which the elector of Hanover had entered into with the German princes, for the purpose of defeating the emperor's wishes respecting Bavaria; and contended, that the measures relative to his majesty's continental dominions, ought to be under the control of his English ministers. He complained also, that no mention was made of India in the speech; and after repeating some of his old arguments against Mr. Pitt's India bill, he affirmed, that it had not produced a single good effect; and that the provision, which required the servants of the company to give an account of their fortunes on oath, was extremely disliked in India.

Mr. Pitt began his reply, by declaring, that he did not mean to depart from that caution, which, it was acknowledged, ministers ought, from a sense of duty, to observe in speaking of foreign courts. He made no remark upon what Mr. Fox had said concerning the treaty between France and Holland; and declined entering into any detailed account of the disposition of the continental powers towards Great Britain, or towards each other, considering the general declaration in the king's speech as sufficient. Nor did he give any answer to Mr. Fox's question respecting the Irish resolutions; but severely censured him for the unguarded and inflammatory language, in which he had spoken upon that delicate subject. He was glad that Mr. Fox had changed his sentiments relative to the finances; as in the last session he had maintained, that there would be a considerable deficiency; and now he admitted, that there would be a surplus. Through what means this surplus had accrued, and whether the honor resulting from it belonged

CHAP. VII. 1786.

to his majesty's ministers, were questions which he found himself very little inclined to discuss, because it was enough for him, that the surplus did exist; and the satisfaction which he felt at the comfortable prospect afforded by it to his country, was sufficient to absorb and overpower every idea of a personal nature, to which it could possibly give occasion. He informed the house, that the treaty with the empress of Russia was in a state of great forwardness; and he had every ground to hope, that it would give general satisfaction. As to the German confederacy, to which his majesty, in his capacity of elector of Hanover, had acceded, he said, that he and his colleagues had no concern, either in the merit or demerit of that measure. Accident had indeed placed the sovereignty of that country, and of this, in the same hands; but it by no means followed, that the interests of each must necessarily be the same; though he admitted, that it might perhaps promote their mutual advantage to make their interests as reconcileable, as the different circumstances and situations of the two countries would allow. He desired to have it understood, that Great Britain was by no means committed or bound by any league lately entered into by the elector of Hanover; nor did he look upon it as incumbent upon the ministers of this kindgom, to lay before parliament, except in cases of necessity, such arrangements as may have been made for Hanover, by the advice of the ministers of that electorate. He noticed the inconsistency of Mr. Fox's apprehension of our being involved in difficulties, through the means of his majesty's German territories, and yet his expectation that the administration of those territories should be subordinate to the government, and

regulated by the ministers, of Great Britain, as if that very circumstance would not of itself render it absolutely necessary, that this country should, on all occasions, consider itself bound to protect and assist the electorate; whereas the only way for Great Britain to avoid embroiling herself in quarrels on account of Hanover, was, by the British administration standing, as much as possible, independent of Hanoverian politics. He said, that India was omitted in the speech, because parliament having passed a bill for the government of our eastern possessions, there was no longer any reason to mention that subject. He defended the bill; and observed, that as the part referred to by Mr. Fox was of a restrictive nature, there was no reason to expect that it would be received with any sanguine marks of approbation, by those on whom the restriction was to operate. The address was voted without a division.

THE first question of importance brought before the house of commons, in the present session, was, a plan of the duke of Richmond, master general of the ordnance, for fortifying the dock-yards of Portsmouth and Plymouth. This plan, in a general view, had undergone some discussion in the preceding session, and was strongly objected to by several members, who were not in the habit of opposing the measures of government. It was, however, admitted on all sides, that it was a subject which demanded full investigation; but at the same time that it was very unfit to be examined in detail before the house, as it might make known, in what places, and by what means, our ports and dock-yards were most exposed to the attacks of the

enemy; and therefore, Mr. Pitt, in consequence of a suggestion from colonel Barré, proposed, that the farther consideration of the business should be postponed, and that the plan should be immediately referred to a certain number of professional men for their opinions, which might enable the house to come to a satisfactory decision at a future time. This idea was approved; and accordingly, on the 13th of April 1785, a board of the most distinguished officers, both in the army and navy, with the duke of Richmond as president, was appointed by the king, who were required to report their sentiments upon the proposed plan, under separate heads, prepared and arranged for that purpose; and six data or hypotheses were annexed, stating the circumstances, under which the enemy might be supposed to make an attack upon the dock-yards. These officers, after attentively considering this important subject, and minutely examining every part of the plan upon the spot, resolved unanimously, "That it is perfectly right, necessary, and wise, effectually to provide in time of peace, for the security of the dock-yards at Portsmouth and Plymouth, by fortifications capable of resisting such an attack, as an enemy may be able to make upon them during the absence of the fleet, or whilst from other causes the fleet may be prevented from affording its protection to the dock-yards;" and all the land officers, except two, declared, that the works recommended appeared to them to be calculated upon the most economical principles, and to require the smallest number of troops possible to answer the purpose of effectually securing the dock-yards at Portsmouth and Plymouth: they conceived, that such numbers could be spared for this purpose; and they considered

such protection to be an essential object for the safety of the state, and intimately connected with the general defence of the kingdom. The plan was afterwards referred to a committee of engineers, who estimated the expence of carrying it into execution at 760,097 *l.*

This estimate, and such parts of the instructions to the board of naval and military officers, and of their report, as might with safety be made public, together with a variety of other papers, were laid before the house, in the middle of February 1786; and, after several previous conversations, from which it was evident, that the plan, even with its present sanction, would meet with very serious opposition, Mr. Pitt, on the 27th of that month, brought the business forward for final determination. He began, by observing, that the system of fortification had been dragged forth to public notice, as deserving the severest censures, which could be thrown on any measure of government; that there had been attempts to excite against it, the feelings, the passions, and even the most estimable prejudices of the nation. It was represented as novel in its principle, as unconstitutional in its tendency to increase the standing army, and as calculated to divert into either an useless or a dangerous channel, those resources, which ought rather to be applied to that great foundation of our strength, of our glory, and of our characteristic superiority over the rest of the nations of Europe, our navy. Such having been the endeavors to give an unfavorable impression of the system—and he was aware, not entirely without effect—he was determined to submit to the house, a proposition, which would embrace all the principles, upon which the question, in

his judgment, rested; and at the same time afford him an opportunity of answering the objections, which had been so vehemently urged, and so industriously circulated. He then read the following resolution, which it was his intention to move, before he sat down, "That it appears to this house, that to provide effectually for securing his majesty's dock-yards at Portsmouth and Plymouth, by a permanent system of fortification, founded on the most economical principles, and requiring the smallest number of troops possible to answer the purpose of such security, is an essential object for the safety of the state, intimately connected with the general defence of the kingdom, and necessary for enabling the fleet to act with full vigor and effect, for the protection of commerce, the support of our distant possessions, and the prosecution of offensive operations in any war, in which the nation may hereafter be engaged."

The first branch of the question which he discussed, was, the necessity of the fortifications for the security of the national defence; and that the house might judge upon this point, he called to their recollection, the unfortunate and calamitous situation of the country in the late war, which was, in a great degree, owing to the want of such fortifications, as it was the aim of the present plan to provide. A considerable part of our fleet was then confined to our ports, in order to protect our dock-yards; and the consequence was, that we were compelled to do, what Great Britain had never done before, to carry on a mere defensive war—a war, in which we wasted our resources, and impaired our strength, without any prospect of benefiting ourselves. Was the house ready to stand responsible

to posterity, for a repetition of such disgraces and misfortunes? Were they willing to take upon themselves the hazard of transmitting to the next generation, those dangers and those consequent calamities, which they had themselves so bitterly experienced? The board of land and sea officers, which had been appointed, and which consisted of every thing that was great and respectable in the two professions, had given the subject a fuller consideration, and a more minute research, than had ever been known on such an occasion, in any other age or country. The report made by that board, was so direct and so conclusive, as to the necessity of the measure, that it ought of itself completely to determine the question. It declared, that neither a naval, nor a military, force, nor even both united, could afford a sufficient security for the nation to rely upon; that fortifications were absolutely necessary; and that, of all modes of fortification, that, suggested by the master general of the ordnance, was the most eligible, as being the most adequate to the defence proposed, capable of being manned by the smallest force, requiring the least expence to erect, and particularly as yielding an increasing degree of security in the course of erection. It would, therefore, be the grossest inconsistency, were the house, after having referred the various branches of the detail of the inquiry to the board of officers, to re-assume that duty, which it had already declined, as being out of its reach, and act in opposition to their report.

To that part of the report, which asserted the necessity of these fortifications, two provisos were indeed annexed; first, that we should be able to bear the expence of erecting them;

CHAP. VII. 1786.

secondly, that we should be able to furnish a force sufficient to man them, when erected.

With regard to the expence of building the works, he flattered himself, that his sentiments and ideas on the subject of the finances of the country, formed a prominent part of his political character. He hoped, that he had not shewn himself remiss in any endeavors, which would probably tend to raise the revenue from that deplorable state to which it was depressed, by the melancholy process of the late war. It was too well known, how much his feelings were engaged, not only by the duty of his station, and by attachment to his country, but by considerations of his own reputation, which was deeply committed in the question, to exert every nerve, to arm all his vigilance, and to concenter all his efforts towards that great object, by which alone the present generation could have a prospect of transmitting to their posterity, that ease and comfort, which they themselves had felt the want of—an efficient sinking fund, for the liquidation of the national debt; to accomplish which, was the first wish of his heart, and that, as well by every means of prudent, well-regulated economy, as by a rigid collection of the revenue. But was he to be seduced by the plausible and popular name of economy—he would not only say plausible and popular, he would rather say, the sacred name of economy—to forego the reality; and, for the sake of adding a few hundred thousand pounds more to the sinking fund, perhaps render for ever abortive the sinking fund itself? Every saving, which could, consistently with the national safety, be made, he pledged himself to make; but he would never consent to starve the public service, or to withhold those

supplies, without which the nation must be endangered. The relieving, by all such means as his duty would suffer him to adopt, the burdens of the people, and removing that load of debt by which they were oppressed, was the grand and ultimate end of his desire; it was the pedestal on which he would wish to raise a column, which should support whatever pretensions he might have to reputation and popularity; but let it be well considered, how far the objects of necessary defence and of public economy could be reconciled; and let the bounds which divide them not be transgressed. Let it be well weighed, what a strong security for a lasting peace there was in a powerful and defensible situation; and how likely weakness and improvidence were to be the forerunners of war. But, should a war happen, where would be economy? What would become of the sinking fund? The very expences of one year's loan would amount to more than the whole of those fortifications which might have secured us peace, because they would have destroyed, or at least materially diminished, all hope of success in an attack. In this point of view, as the means of preventing war, he should conceive, that the first million which should be applied as the foundation of the sinking fund, would not be better applied than a million of money for the fortifications; not that a million would prove necessary, but he chose to state the expence as high as any other gentleman, let his talents for exaggeration be what they might, could possibly carry it.

With regard to our being able to man the fortifications when erected, that point was decided by papers laid upon the table, in consequence of motions made by the enemies of

the measure. It appeared from those authentic documents, that in 1779 there were 16,000 men, and in 1782 by a progressive increase 21,500, stationed in cantonments within reach of Portsmouth and Plymouth; and as our then extensive dominions were now much diminished, and of course there would hereafter be less occasion for sending soldiers out of Great Britain, there could be no difficulty, in case of invasion in a future war, in furnishing sufficient garrisons for the proposed works. It was indeed scarcely possible to imagine, that the country could not supply 22,000 troops, the number stated to be necessary, for so important a service as the defence of our principal dock yards.

A few dissents of the board of officers, had been entered to particular parts of the report; but only one officer, a captain in the navy*, had expressed an opinion that no new fortifications were necessary, and his opinion was confined to Plymouth. Mr. Pitt examined the grounds and substance of those dissents, and shewed that they deserved no weight, as far as the general expediency of the plan was concerned.

It had been objected, that the instructions given to the board of officers, were such as confined them to the necessity of coming to one certain result, by means of the data proposed for their consideration, as being all merely hypothetical, and affording them no latitude for the exercise of their own judgment: to this Mr. Pitt replied, that it was impossible to suppose that such men were duped and deluded unanimously to give an opinion contrary to their own conviction; and that, in fact, the board, according to the discretionary power allowed them,

* Captain Macbride.

had substituted two new data, instead of the first two, and considerably altered two of the others, for the purpose of rendering them a better foundation for their ultimate decision.

Mr. Pitt combated the position, that the whole system of fortifications was new and unprecedented in this country, by referring to the most incontestable records of history, which proved, that they always made a part of the general defence of England. Even during the reign of king Henry the eighth, there was a provision made by statute for fortifying certain parts of the coast. The same policy was observed by queen Elizabeth, and formed a considerable part of the defence provided by that great and glorious princess against the expected attack of the armada. In the less prosperous reigns of the Stewarts, the same system was occasionally continued; and again adopted by our illustrious deliverer, William the third. During the reign of queen Anne, at the time when the victories of the British arms were forming an era in the history of Europe, at which England looks back with pride, and other nations with amazement, did our ancestors think it incompatible with their fame, with their liberty, or with the constitution, to fortify the most vulnerable parts of their coasts, as it was now proposed to do? On the contrary, there was a resolution of the commons, not even at the desire of the crown, laying down the necessity of fortifying the dock-yards against any possible invasion; and the sum then voted for the execution of plans made in the time of king William, was greater than that now required, allowance being made for the difference in the value of money. To come down to a later period, a period to which it might be supposed he was some-

what partial, the last war—the last war! would to heaven he could call it the last war—not indeed the last, but the last on which Britons could reflect without either a sigh or a blush—the war of contrast with the last—the war, in which the name of Britain was exalted above the highest and the proudest of nations, by successes as stupendous, and conquests as glorious, as our late miscarriages and defeats had been calamitous and disgraceful. What was the policy of the administration of that day? That it was exactly similar to what was now recommended, he proved by reading extracts from laws then passed for that purpose. "Thus," continued he, "it appears, that in the very best days of this country, the system of fortifications was uniformly practised and encouraged. But even in a much later period, during the administration of the right honorable gentleman opposite, (Mr. Fox) the very identical system of fortifications now under discussion, was considered, and an estimate for carrying it into effect, actually presented to the house. I suppose the right honorable gentleman will be prepared to give his reasons for that change of opinion, which, it is to be feared, he intends on the present occasion to avow."

As to the necessity suggested, as likely to ensue from this measure, of augmenting the standing army, nothing could, he said, be more void of foundation. It had been unanimously reported by the board of officers, that the plan of fortifications proposed, was the best calculated for the defence of the dock-yards, which could be devised, and that it required but a moderate force. Would any person then contend, that a certain number of troops, independent of fortifications, would be able to defend a place better than the same number assisted

with the best possible fortifications? Such an idea was too absurd to be argued against; and yet, in fact, it was the only idea on which that ground of opposition could be maintained. Should we, in case of invasion, trust solely to our standing army, there would then indeed be a necessity of augmenting, to a most enormous degree, that army, on which the whole safety of the kingdom was to rest. Was this the way to vindicate and secure our liberties? If we did not keep up such an army, we should be under the necessity of recurring to foreign assistance—perhaps to the protection of mercenaries, bribed by our money, and who, when we had no longer occasion for their services, would prove ready to turn their arms against ourselves. Was it less desirable for us to be defended by the walls of Portsmouth and Plymouth garrisoned by our own militia, than to purchase the protection of Hessian hirelings?

There was also another part of the subject, which ought to have the greatest weight of all, and that was, that these fortifications, being calculated to afford complete security to the dock-yards, would enable our whole fleet to go upon remote services, and carry on the operations of war at a distance, without exposing the materials for future navies, to the danger of destruction by the invasion of an enemy. It had been insinuated, that the second datum in his majesty's instructions, had been inserted to draw forth an acquiescence from the board of officers, upon an unreasonable supposition of the fleet being absent for an improbable time. He believed, there were few gentlemen, who could forget, that at no very distant period, even since he had the honor of a place in his

majesty's counsels, the fleet had been absent for a time nearly equal to that supposed in the datum, upon a service, which this country could not have dispensed with, without sacrificing the most brilliant success, which attended us in the late war; a success of such lustre, as to spread an irradiation over the more gloomy scenes in which we had been involved. Had we been then in fear of an attack upon our coasts, which, from reasons not proper to be mentioned, we happened not to be, Gibraltar, and the renown of defending it, must have been for ever lost. But it was not only by foreign expeditions that we might be deprived of the aid of our fleet in case of an invasion, it might so happen, that our fleet, though in the Channel, might be prevented by contrary winds, tides, or other contingencies, from arriving to the assistance and relief of our dock-yards. What would then prove the situation of this country? The enemy might in one day*, in one hour, do an irreparable injury, and give a mortal stab to the very spring and vital principle of our national vigor; might effectually destroy the seeds of that navy, from which alone we had to hope for commerce, for safety, and for glory. On the whole, he really thought the present rather a question to be considered as connected with our naval establishment,

* Towards the close of the American war, our two great naval arsenals were in a state so entirely unprotected, when the combined fleets of France and Spain were in the mouth of the channel, that the commissioner at Plymouth wrote to the admiralty, that if any force should be landed, the dock-yard must infallibly be burnt; and at Portsmouth, the panic was so great, that an immense chain was provided at the sally port, ready to be drawn across the mouth of the harbour, to the block house, on the Gosport side; the marks for entering the harbor were thrown down; and the buoys placed over the sands were taken away.

than with that of either our army or ordnance; as it was calculated to give liberty to our fleet, which had hitherto been confined occasionally to our coasts, and, as it were, to the defence of our dock-yards. Were it to be asked, why the sum required for these fortifications had not been demanded for strengthening the navy, he should answer fairly, that he thought the same sum, laid out upon the fleet, would by no means afford a strength equal to that which would be derived from the fortifications. The money, which would be sufficient to accomplish these works, would not build so many ships as would answer for the defence of those invaluable harbors of Portsmouth and Plymouth. There was, besides, a certain degree, beyond which the navy of this country could not go; there was a certain number of ships, beyond which they could neither build nor man any more: what that limit was, he could not, nor would it be proper for him to, point out; yet, necessarily, such a limit must exist, in the nature of things: but there never could be any line drawn to limit the security, which we ought to provide for our dock-yards.

In this manner did Mr. Pitt show, upon the authority of eminent professional men, that fortifications were absolutely necessary for the preservation and security of our dock-yards; that the proposed plan was the best which could be devised for accomplishing this desirable object; that its execution would not be attended with any unreasonable expence, when compared with its importance; that in its principle it was consistent with the practice of former times; that it would tend to diminish rather than to increase our standing army; and that it

CHAP. VII. 1786.

would leave our fleet at liberty to carry on offensive war at a distance from our own coast.

But these arguments, though enforced with all his powers of eloquence, were not sufficient to overcome the prejudices conceived against fortifications. It was still maintained, that the plan was of a dangerous and unconstitutional tendency, without being effectual, and that Englishmen ought to look to their navy for safety and protection; and Mr. Sheridan, whose speech upon this occasion was greatly admired for its ingenuity, contended, that these unassailable fortresses might, in the hands of an ambitious and ill-advised king, be made the engines for subverting the liberties of the people; and that soldiers, detached from their fellow-subjects, and shut up in garrisons and forts, would be more likely to support such an attempt, than if they had been living scattered and entangled in all the common duties and connexions of their countrymen, and thus preserving the character of citizens. Upon a division, the numbers were precisely equal, 169 on each side; and the speaker (Mr. Cornwall) gave his casting vote against the resolution, which put an end to the business. Mr. Pitt greatly lamented this failure, being decidedly of opinion, that the fortifications might, in the event of war, have proved of essential service to the nation.

THE next subject to which I am to call the attention of my readers, is, Mr. Pitt's plan for the redemption of the national debt, the greatest and most important measure of finance ever adopted in this or in any other country; which alone would be sufficient to immortalize the name of its wise and

provident author, and entitle him to the warmest gratitude of the present and all succeeding generations. CHAP. VII. 1786.

Prior to the revolution, the public debts were considered as the personal obligations of the sovereign; but they were sometimes discharged by grants made by parliament. The earliest instance of this kind, which occurs in our history, was in the reign of Hen. 3. The kings of England frequently borrowed money, for public purposes, upon their private security, both from their own subjects, and from foreigners; and in many cases, they discharged the debts of their predecessors, though they were not bound so to do. Hen. 3, Edw. 3, & Hen. 5, were all in such pecuniary distress, that they were under the necessity of pawning the royal jewels, and even the crown itself. The first attempt to raise money upon parliamentary security, was in the reign of Ric. 2; and it failed, though the sum required was only 60,000 *l.* intended to be employed in the invasion of France. In subsequent reigns, money was borrowed upon the security of subsidies granted by parliament, which was repaid when the subsidies were received.

The practice of funding, that is, of borrowing money upon national credit and creating transferrable stock, bearing a certain annual interest, arose out of the peculiar manners and circumstances of modern Europe, and was first resorted to by some of the minor states upon the continent. It was introduced into England very soon after the revolution, and has since been progressively carried by our government, to a most astonishing extent. The annuities granted, when money was borrowed, were at first for a limited number of years, or for

lives, and consequently the interest was at a high rate; but it soon happened, that these temporary annuities were made perpetual, upon the creditors or stockholders advancing additional sums; which led to the grant at once of perpetual annuities, the first instance of which was in 1695 *. In the same manner the taxes, imposed as a security for the payment of the annuities belonging to these respective loans, were at first temporary, and afterwards perpetual. A distinct account was kept of each loan, and of its taxes; and when the taxes produced more than was sufficient for the payment of the interest of the loan, the overplus was generally, though not invariably, employed in reducing the principal of that particular loan. As loans and taxes multiplied, these separate funds were found extremely inconvenient; and in the beginning of the reign of Geo. 1, they were all combined into three, called the aggregate fund, the general fund, and the South Sea fund. To these respective funds the produce of certain taxes and duties was to be carried, and from them the interest of certain parts of the debt, and other specified charges, were to be paid. In 1716, the year in which the two last of the above funds were established, a fourth fund was formed, consisting of the surplusses of those three funds, after satisfying all the demands upon them; and it was called the sinking fund, because it was appropriated to the discharge of the principal of the national debt, incurred before the 25th of December 1716; and as the act expressed, "to and for none other use, intent, or purpose whatsoever." Similar words

* The first exchequer bills were issued in 1696, during the re-coinage, on account of the bad state of the silver coin.

were used in an act upon the same subject, in 1718; and the improvement and inviolable application of this fund were not only recommended in several of the king's speeches in subsequent years, and promised in the addresses of the house of commons, but money was actually borrowed several times for the public service upon new taxes, rather than that any encroachment should be made upon the sinking fund. Unfortunately this scrupulous attention did not continue. It is a most remarkable fact, that, notwithstanding all the pledges and engagements which have been mentioned, the sinking fund was afterwards repeatedly diverted from its original destination, even in time of peace as well as of war, by the very minister * who established it, both by charging it with the interest of new loans, and by taking from it large sums for the annual public expenditure. The first instance of this kind was in 1728-9, when this fund was charged with the payment of the interest of 1,250,000*l.* raised for the service of the current year. The second, was of a similar nature, in 1731; and the third, was by taking 500,000*l.* from it for the service of 1733, that the land-tax might be kept at 1*s.* in the pound, to conciliate the country gentlemen. This example of sir Robert Walpole was followed by his successors in office, and gradually carried farther and farther, so that at last it became the constant practice to apply the whole of the sinking fund, as part of the ways and means of the year: the consequence of which was, that, when Mr. Pitt was placed at the head of the treasury, there was not only no efficient sinking fund for the reduction of the national debt, then grown to an enormous

* Sir Robert Walpole.

amount; but the whole produce of the permanent taxes was considerably less than the interest of the debt and other fixed charges upon the revenue, exclusive of all the necessary annual expences, amounting to several millions, for which there was only the very inadequate provision of the land and malt taxes. This alienation of the sinking fund was the more to be lamented, because, though at first it amounted to only about half a million, it was, soon after its establishment, and again at subsequent periods, greatly increased, in consequence of the progressive reduction of the interest of the national debt. In 1717, this interest was reduced from 6 to 5 per cent; in 1727, from 5 to 4 per cent; in 1750, from 4 to 3½ per cent; and in 1755 and 1757, from 3½ to 3 per cent, since which time there has been no reduction. These successive reductions of the interest of the national debt proportionally diminished the charge upon the three funds, and of course increased those surplusses, which constituted the nominal sinking fund of that day. Had that fund, thus augmented, been really applied to the gradual liquidation of the debt, its operation must have been effectual, and highly advantageous to the country.

At the peace of Ryswick in 1697, the national debt amounted to 21½ millions, of which 5 millions were paid off in the four following years of peace; and, consequently, when the succession war broke out in 1701, the debt was about 16½ millions. That war increased the debt to 54½ millions; and in the long period between 1713 and 1740, in which there were only three years of war, there was a reduction of only 7½ millions. At the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748, the national debt amounted to 78 millions, of which only 3¾

millions had been discharged when the seven years war began in 1755. At the end of that war in 1762, the national debt amounted to 146½ millions, of which 10½ millions had been discharged, when the American war commenced in 1776. At the beginning of 1786, after all the expences of the American war were funded, the national debt amounted to 239 millions, exclusive of two millions of loyalists debentures.

From this summary statement it appears, that the increase of the national debt was very rapid in time of war, and its diminution very slow in time of peace, 200 millions of debt having been incurred in 25 years of war, and less than 22 millions paid off in 45 years of peace, from the first establishment of the sinking fund in 1716 to 1786. Its enormous amount at the end of the American war, was the subject of great anxiety and alarm. "The national debt," said the commissioners of public accounts, "is swelled to a magnitude that requires the united efforts of the ablest heads, and the purest hearts, to suggest the proper and effectual means of reduction. A plan must be formed for the reduction of this debt, and that without delay. Now is the favorable moment of peace. The evil does not admit of procrastination, palliation, or expedients. It presses on, and must be met with force and firmness: what *can* be done, the support of public credit, the preservation of national honor, and the justice due to the public creditor, demand, *should* be done. It must be done, or serious consequences will ensue!" The general impression was, that the funding system could not be carried beyond a certain point; and many persons were apprehensive, that we had already approached very near to that limit, the transgression of which

CHAP. VII. 1786.

threatened the nation with all the untried evils of public bankruptcy. How soon another war might call for new loans, no one could foresee; but all were aware, that to suffer the debt to remain in its present state, would be to invite aggression. It was therefore universally agreed, that the immediate establishment of some plan for its gradual reduction was essential to the peace and welfare of the country; and the means by which that desirable purpose might be best accomplished, had long occupied the thoughts of speculative men.

Mr. Pitt having announced his design of submitting to parliament a proposal upon this subject, received an almost incredible number of schemes and projects, most of which were so visionary as not to deserve a moment's consideration; but others were of a nature, and came from quarters, which entitled them to serious attention. In a few instances, the principles upon which they were founded, at first appeared specious and plausible; but upon a closer examination it was discovered, that they were impracticable, or, if carried into execution, would probably lead to disappointment and mischief: they promised advantage, but rested upon hypothetical cases, which, in the judgment of practical experienced men, could not be expected really to exist. After weighing every suggestion of others, to which any regard was due, and maturely and anxiously reflecting upon every idea which occurred to his own fertile mind, he was convinced, that no mode would be so effectual, or so little liable to danger or objection, as the simple plan of purchasing stock at the market price on behalf of the public, accompanied with the strongest provisions and guards which could be devised, to render the

fund so applied unalienable, and to secure its increase at compound interest*.

Having come to this determination, as a preparatory step, and with a view to give full and complete satisfaction both to parliament and to the nation, upon a point of such great and general concern, he laid before the house a variety of accounts, and then moved that they should be referred to the consideration of a select committee, who were to examine them, and to report to the house, what might be expected to be the amount of the future annual income and expenditure of the country. Mr. Fox approved this mode of proceeding, and observed, that

* Among other fanciful schemes of theoretical men, Mr. Pitt rejected the specious but delusive projects, of converting low into high stocks. It is easy for a speculative man, sitting in his closet, to invent a plan of this sort, which would be advantageous to the public; but he forgets, that the stockholder will never consent to it—a fatal blow to his ingenuity and patriotism; and such a man is apt enough to complain, that his plan has not been adopted. In Mr. Pitt's plan, the consent of the stockholder is not required any farther than as he wishes to sell his stock; and it is well known, that there are always large quantities of stock in the market for sale. It should be remembered, that the guards and provisions, by which the fund was rendered unalienable, and its increase at compound interest secured, constitute the peculiar and valuable part of Mr. Pitt's system, and were never before attempted by any minister. His grand merit, however, with respect to the point now under consideration, was, first, the having raised the income of the country to such a height, as to leave a surplus of a million for the reduction of its debt; and secondly, his inviolable adherence to the application of that sum, with all its accruing additions, during the unexampled pressure of a long and expensive war, in which our very existence as an independent nation was at stake; a conduct directly contrary to that of all his predecessors in office, since the establishment of the former sinking fund, and which probably saved this country from becoming a province of France.

whenever papers, complicated and various as those in question must necessarily be, required investigation and arrangement, before they could be applied to any practical use, it was always proper to refer them to a select committee. The motion was unanimously agreed to; and the committee thus appointed, consisted of nine persons, of whom Mr. W. Grenville was chosen chairman. They made their report on the 21st of March; and on the 29th Mr. Pitt brought the business forward in a luminous and comprehensive speech, in which he not only explained his plan for the redemption of the national debt, but proposed the additional taxes necessary to raise the national income to the required amount; and also stated the supplies, and ways and means of the present year, subjects which could not indeed be well separated.

"The object," said Mr. Pitt on that day, "which I have to refer to this committee, is, to consider of the means of decreasing the national debt. To attempt to recommend this purpose by any words, would surely be superfluous. The situation of this country, loaded with an enormous debt, to pay the interest of which, every nerve has been stretched, and every resource nearly drained, carries with it a stronger recommendation than any arguments I could possibly adduce. That something should be done to relieve the nation from the pressure of so heavy a load, is indeed very generally acknowledged, and I trust, that in this house there is only one feeling on the subject. To you do the people turn their eyes, justly expecting, that from the trust you hold, you will think it your duty, to make the most serious efforts, in order to afford them the long

wished for prospect, of being relieved from an endless accumulation of taxes, under the burden of which they are ready to sink. Upon the deliberations of this day do they place all their hopes of a full return of prosperity, and that public security, which will give confidence and vigor to those exertions in trade and commerce, upon which the flourishing state of the country depends. Not only this house, and the public, but other nations look to the business of this day; for by the establishment of what is now proposed, our rank will be decided among the powers of Europe. To behold this country emerging from a most unfortunate war, which added such an accumulation to a debt before immense, that it was the belief of surrounding nations, and of many among ourselves, that our powers must fail us, and that we should not be able to bear up under it—to behold this nation, instead of despairing at its alarming condition, looking its situation boldly in the face, and establishing upon a spirited and permanent plan, the means of relieving itself from all its incumbrances, must give such an idea of our resources and of our spirit of exertion, as will astonish the nations around us, and enable us to regain that pre-eminence, to which we are, on many accounts, so justly entitled. The propriety and necessity of adopting a plan for this purpose, are not only universally allowed, but it is also admitted, that immediate steps ought to be taken in this important business. And I am persuaded, that whatever difference of opinion we may have in this house, upon political points, all parties will concur in thinking, that effectual provision should this day be made to reduce the debt of the nation.

" The chief object then before the house, is, not whether the

recommendation in his majesty's speech, should be complied with; nor even is it a matter of dispute, what sum ought to be allotted for this purpose: for it seems agreed, by common consent of all, that one million annually ought to be appropriated to the gradual liquidation of the national debt.

"The great points which we have to consider, are, in the first place, what measures ought to be taken to acquire this million; and, secondly, what is the way of applying it.

"I must here congratulate the nation upon the arrival of the day, when all despondency and gloomy fear may be laid aside, and our prospects are brightened with joy and hope. With how much pleasure am I able to announce, that a million can be obtained, without laying any new heavy burdens upon the people! This is beyond the hopes of any man, and is indeed a subject of the greatest rejoicing to every friend of his country.

"In order to be acquainted with our real situation, and to see what we have and what we want, I mean to state the annual income and the annual expenditure of the nation, as the ground upon which we are to proceed with regard to the object before us."

Mr. Pitt then informed the house, that the income of the country, as calculated by the select committee, for the year ending at the preceding Michaelmas, amounted to 15,379,182*l.* and for the year ending at Christmas, to 15,397,471*l.* the difference between which sums was less than 20,000*l.*; and after enumerating the particulars of which the public income consisted, he proceeded thus: "From the reasoning contained in the report, we have ground to conclude, that this flourishing condition of

our revenue will continue. It is more than would have been thought possible, that within a single year such an improvement should take place. The improvement, however, has not been confined to one year; it has been uniform, ever since the happy era of the restoration of peace. The increase was slow at first, but constant; and the more rapid progress of the last year, shows from most satisfactory experience, that we have no reason to fear its being stationary, or becoming retrograde.

" A great part of the prosperous appearance which commerce has put on, and the great influx into the exchequer, have been owing to the regulations adopted for crushing clandestine traffic, although at present they have not had their full operation; because, as large capitals were employed in smuggling, the occupation will subsist for a time, even after it is become a losing trade. The success of the late measures, incontrovertibly proved by the increased produce of the customs, gives room to hope, that farther great and essential advantages may arise from wholesome regulations with regard to other articles of illicit traffic, which will open permanent sources of income, by making trade return into its natural channel. The frauds still committed upon the revenue, are more numerous and more detrimental than any one, not conversant in subjects of this kind, can imagine; and I have it in contemplation to submit to parliament, plans for the correction of those evils in the different branches of trade and commerce, particularly in wines, spirits, tobacco, and salt. It is also my intention, in the next session, to propose the consolidation

of the customs, which cannot fail to be beneficial to the revenue.

" Having thus represented every thing in the fairest and most correct manner in my power, to enable you to form a just view of the real and probable sources of our national income, I shall now act upon the idea, that this is a true statement of the revenue, which has been laid upon your table by the committee; and that we may expect, with as much certainty as can attend any thing of this kind, that we shall enjoy an increasing revenue of 15,397,000*l.* per annum.

" The next subject of our discussion is, what may be expected to be the annual expenditure of the nation. This the committee have also calculated, and it amounts to 14,478,000*l.*: deducting therefore the annual expenditure from the annual income, there is left a surplus of about 900,000*l.*

" This then is the sum which remains to be applied to the diminution of the national debt: but as the fund for that purpose ought to be a million annually, I shall move in this committee such taxes as will produce 100,000*l.* a year; and I am happy to repeat, that this sum may be raised without any material pressure upon the public." He then informed the committee, that he should propose an additional duty upon spirits, a modification of the existing tax upon foreign timber*,

* This modification as at first intended, gave offence in Russia, from whence a considerable quantity of timber was imported into this kingdom, and a complaint was made in a dispatch from Petersburgh to Count Woronzow, the Russian minister at our court, with some severe reflections upon Mr. Pitt, for proposing a measure affecting the trade with Russia, while a commercial treaty between the two countries was depending. Count Woronzow, in his reply, said, " Permettez moi de defendre Mr. Pitt que vous accusez d'avoir etè dans cette

which would make it more productive, and taxes upon perfumery and hair powder. These taxes, which could not be oppressive to any description of persons, would complete the required million; to which he intended to add such temporary annuities, both for years and lives, as should fall in from time to time.

"It ought to be observed," he proceeded to state, "that though 14,478,000*l.* is calculated to be the annual expenditure, some time must intervene, before the expenditure can be reduced to that sum. We are to remember, that we have only just emerged from the most ruinous and expensive war, in which this country was ever engaged. Many of the heavy burdens we incurred during that war, did not end with the conclusion of it, but still continue, and must be expected to continue to hang upon us some time longer. It would, however, be unfair and unwise to consider them as forming part of our annual expenditure, as they must cease altogether in a short time." He here entered into a detail of the extraordinary expences he alluded to, which were principally the completion of ships already begun to be built, arrears on account of the army, and compensation to American sufferers;

affaire rien qu'un financier impolitique: Il a etè induit en erreur par la nomination de ces marchandises qui s'appellent ici par le nom general de planches, poutres, et battens de Norvege; mais des qu'il a vu que cela affectoit le commerce de Russie, il a d'abord remedié a la chose, quoque elle fut deja presenteè et approuvee par la chambre des communes. Vous voyez donc qu'il a eté plus politique et homme d'etat, que simple financier: Il a agi dans cette affaire, comme dans tout ce qu'il fait, avec une franchise et une celerite qui lui est propre. Je ne puis assez me louer de ce ministre: Je le vois peu, parce qu'il est accablè d'affaires, et je ne connois pas comment il peut y suffire.

CHAP. VII. 1786.

and stated them as likely to amount to three millions in the next four years: but he said, that it would not be necessary to make any provision for these expences, because extraordinary resources, such as lotteries, army savings, and balance from the East India company, would arise in the same period, fully sufficient to answer the expected demand. If, however, those resources should fail, and it should prove hereafter necessary to fund the whole of the three millions, there could be no doubt but the income of the country, improved, as he trusted it would be, by the farther prevention of frauds, would be able to bear the additional charge without any new taxes.

" I may therefore," continued he, " be justified in considering the revenue, as hereafter affording a surplus of a million a year. But before I enter upon that part of the discussion which relates to the particular mode of applying this annual sum, it will be proper to consider the effect it will have. If this million, to be so applied, be laid out, with its growing interest, it will amount to a very great sum in a period, which is not very long in the life of an individual, and but an hour in the existence of a great nation. In a period of 28 years, the sum of a million, annually improved at compound interest, would amount to four millions per annum *. But care must be taken that this fund be not broken in upon: this has hitherto been the bane of this country; for if the original sinking fund † had been properly preserved, it is easy to be proved,

* This supposed interest at 5 per cent.

† The original sinking fund was not a definite sum: but supposing that it had been only half a million a year, and that it had been uninterruptedly employed in the purchase of 3 per cents, at 75, in 70 years, that is, from its first establish-

that our debts at this moment would not have been very burdensome: this has hitherto been in vain endeavored to be prevented by acts of parliament: the minister has uniformly, when it suited his convenience, gotten hold of this sum, which ought to have been regarded as most sacred. What then is the way of preventing this? The plan I mean to propose is, that this sum be vested in certain commissioners, to be by them applied quarterly to buy up stock, by which means no great sum will ever lie ready to be seized upon on any occasion, and the fund will go on without interruption, till it becomes four millions a year, by which time it will have liquidated 100 millions of three per cents; and I propose, that the parliament of that day should decide, whether the fund should still continue to increase at compound interest. Long, very long, has this country struggled under its heavy load, without any prospect of relief; but it may now look forward to an object, upon which its very existence depends: it is, therefore, proper it should be fortified as much possible against alienation. By this manner of paying the money quarterly into the hands of commissioners, who will be required to lay out an equal sum on every transfer day in the quarter, it will be impossible to take it by stealth; and the advantage will be too fully experienced ever to suffer a public act for that purpose. A minister could not have the confidence to come to this house, and desire the repeal of so beneficial a law, tending directly to relieve the people from their burdens.

ment in 1716 to 1786, the time Mr. Pitt was speaking, it would have redeemed 242 millions; and, if the 3 per cents had been at par, it would have redeemed 115 millions.

CHAP. VII. 1786.

"The persons appointed to the trust should be of rank and distinction, to secure them from suspicion; and to give, as far as character can go, a belief of their discharging it with faithfulness. I therefore think it right, that the respectable commoner, whoever he may be, who fills the chair of this house, should be the first commissioner. Parliament, in instituting a commission of so much importance towards the support of national credit and prosperity, could not more solemnly, or more pointedly, promulgate its high sense of the duty to which that commission is bound, than by appointing the first member of this house to be at the head of it. I think also, without ascribing any thing to myself, that the person who holds an office so intimately connected with finance as the chancellor of the exchequer, ought to have a place in this commission. There is another person, who, from his high rank, as well as from his virtues and reputation, I think ought to have a share in this business, and he is also, at present, a member of this house: I mean the master of the rolls. The governor and deputy governor of the bank of England ought, I think, also to be of the number. And lastly, the accountant general of the high court of chancery, who, by virtue of his office, is already employed in managing the money of all suitors and wards in the funds, and increasing the capital by the accumulation of compound interest, ought to be a member of this commission.

"I am very far from attributing any merit to myself in suggesting this scheme; but, I cannot but think myself peculiarly happy in having a task to perform so very different from any of my predecessors; and that, instead of expending the money of the public, I should have the great good fortune to be able

to propose the diminution of our burdens. This plan, which I have now the honor to bring forward, has long been the wish and hope of all men; and I am proud to flatter myself, that my name may be inscribed upon that firm column now about to be raised to national faith and national prosperity. I shall detain the house very little longer, because I am persuaded, they must be already tired by the tedious detail, into which I have been under the necessity of entering. The time, when the operation of this fund is to begin, should, I think, be the fifth of next July; on that day, let 250,000*l.* be paid into the hands of the commissioners for this purpose, and afterwards continued quarterly: this will make 750,000*l.* to be expended in the three remaining quarters of the present year; and I shall just mention upon what I found the expectation of a surplus to that amount.

Mr. Pitt then stated the particulars of the supplies, and of the ways and means, of the present year: the former amounted to 12,477,085*l.* and the latter to 13,362,480*l.* leaving a surplus of 885,395*l.* from which might be taken 750,000*l.* for the new sinking fund; and there would then remain in the exchequer 135,395*l.* applicable to the service of the succeeding year.

Mr. Pitt concluded by moving a resolution, directing the issue of a million per annum, to be vested in commissioners, and by them applied to the reduction of the national debt.

Mr. Fox observed, that Mr. Pitt's elaborate and far-extended speech*, while it reminded him, how much time had elapsed,

* Mr. Pitt passed the morning of this day, in providing the calculations which he had to state, and in examining the resolutions which he had to move; and at last he said that he would go and take a short walk by himself, that he might

CHAP. VII. 1786.

suggested also the conviction of the impropriety of his trespassing, at the present advanced hour, too long upon the attention of the committee. But, in the outset of what he had to say, he begged leave to declare, that no man in existence was, or ever had been, a greater friend to the principle of a sinking fund, than he was, and had ever shewn himself, from the first moment of his political life; and that he agreed most perfectly with Mr. Pitt, in his general ideas of the necessity of such a measure. After asserting, that Mr. Pitt ought to have founded his calculations upon the average produce of the revenue for several years, and not upon the produce of the last year only, he said, that there were two parts of the plan, which he disapproved: the one, making the sum appropriated unalienable in time of war; the other, making the obligation to pay off the debt, general, and not pledging or binding it closer. He pointed out various disadvantages, which, in his opinion, might result from tying up the sum in time of war; and contended, that, as the commission, and the object of its institution, were not bound down to any specific point, both were liable to be annihilated by a future parliament. He reminded the house of the mode of the original establishment of a plan for paying

arrange in his mind what he had to say in the house. He returned in a quarter of an hour, and told me he believed he was prepared. After dressing himself, he ordered dinner to be sent up; and learning at that moment that his sister, (who was then living in the house with him,) and a lady with her, were going to dine at the same early hour, he desired that their dinner might be sent up with his, and that they might dine together. He passed nearly an hour with these ladies, and several friends who called in their way to the house, talking with his usual liveliness and gaiety as if having nothing upon his mind: he then went immediately to the house of commons, and made this "elaborate and far-extended speech," as Mr. Fox called it, without one omission or error.

off part of the national debt, which had been by a subscription of individuals, to whom the faith of parliament was pledged to pay off certain specific portions at stated periods. He dwelt on the difference between the two modes; observing, that when the nation, or when parliament, stood bound to individuals, the pledge was held as sacred as the pledge to pay the interest of the national debt at present, or the annuities now payable; and undoubtedly, nothing short of a national bankruptcy would prevent the payment of the sums engaged to be paid to individual subscribers; whereas, upon the conditions on which the proposed commission would stand, what should hinder a future minister, in a future war, when the exigency of affairs might require additional burdens to be imposed on the subject, from coming down to that house, and proposing a bill to repeal the act authorizing the institution of the commission, and to enable government to apply all the money and stock in their hands to the public service? What should hinder the house from agreeing to the proposition? or was it at all likely, that, under the exigency of the moment, they would not immediately agree to it, when so much money could be easily got at, and when they could so readily avoid the odious and unpleasant task of imposing new taxes on themselves and their constituents? From the various guards, which the right honorable gentleman intended to put upon the commission, it was obvious, that he saw the suspicions and dangers to which it would be liable: and therefore Mr. Fox declared, the more guards put upon it the better.

Mr. Pitt replied, that the numerous taxes which had been

lately imposed, and the recent regulations which had been adopted for the improvement of the revenue, would make it very improper to have recourse to an average produce of several years; and that he had every reason to believe, that the principles, upon which the select committee and himself had estimated the future annual income of the country, would not disappoint the expectations they had formed. He hoped, the right honorable gentleman would not consider it as any offence, if he declared, that the idea of paying off a part of the debt by a subscription of individuals, had been suggested to him by many others, and that he himself approved the principle, but declined adopting it, on account of certain inconveniencies, to which it was liable. With regard to preserving the fund unalienable, it was the essence of the plan to keep it sacred, and untouched, and most particularly so, in time of war. He must contend, that to suffer the fund at any time, or on any pretence, to be diverted from its proper object, would be to defeat, overturn, and ruin the whole of his plan. He trusted, therefore, that when the bill, which he should introduce, should have passed into a law, the house would hold itself solemnly pledged, not to listen to a proposal for its repeal, or for any alteration in its material provisions, on any ground whatever. It was, however, absolutely impossible, he acknowledged, for the present parliament to pass an act upon this or upon any other subject, which should not be liable to repeal or alteration by a future parliament

In the course of his speech, Mr. Fox had remarked, that however difficult the house might think the subject, and there-

fore be loth to listen to him *, nothing was more easy; there was not the smallest conjuration in it; and he that ran, might read. This was undesigned praise, and strictly applicable to Mr. Pitt's plan, the great merit of which consisted in being plain, simple, intelligible, and easily carried into execution. It was, moreover, fully competent to the accomplishment of its purpose; it required not, like the sinking fund of 1716, the interposition of parliament from time to time; its execution depended not upon the will, or the vigilance, of the minister of the day, but would proceed uniformly and regularly, without any fresh authority, or any interference of government; the money was to be issued out of the exchequer every quarter, before any other payment was made, except the interest of the national debt; the commissioners were persons on whom the most perfect reliance might be placed, and they were to have as little discretionary power as possible; the beneficial consequences of the plan must necessarily be known and felt by the public, and the mischiefs of departing from it, when once established, could not be concealed or palliated: these were the best securities, and most effectual precautions, which the nature of the thing admitted, and afforded the strongest ground for confidence, that no future chancellor of the exchequer, or member, whether in or out of office, would ever venture to make a direct proposal to parliament, for the repeal of so salutary a law; and an indirect diversion of the fund, by any evasive means, was rendered utterly impracticable.

* The house had been extremely attentive during the whole of Mr. Pitt's speech, occasionally shewing the strongest marks of approbation; but became very impatient immediately after he sat down, and continued so even while Mr. Fox was speaking.

These qualities were such obvious and powerful recommendations of the plan, the object of which was universally acknowledged to be of the highest national importance, that no serious opposition was made to the resolution, or afterwards to the bill for carrying it into effect, in any part of its progress through the two houses. On the day fixed for its commitment, Mr. Sheridan moved a variety of resolutions, with the design of shewing, that there was at present no surplus whatever in the income of the country; but Mr. William Grenville pointed out the fallacy of his reasoning; and the resolutions, which were not supported by any one member, were negatived without a division. Never was the admiration of any public measure more warm and general, and never was there fuller confidence in the soundness of the principles upon which it was founded.

Mr. Fox indeed, on the day Mr. Pitt opened his plan, was so far from indicating a disposition to afford it any support or assistance, that besides expressing his disapprobation of it, in the manner which has been mentioned, he pledged himself to produce a plan on a future day, which should have a preferable claim to the concurrence of the house: this was probably said without much consideration, as he never mentioned the subject again. On the contrary, perceiving the popularity of Mr. Pitt's plan, both in and out of parliament, or convinced, upon reflection, that it was better calculated to be beneficial to the country than any thing he could propose, he soon ceased to throw any obstacle in its way, and at length became so reconciled to it, as to acknowledge, in a late stage of the bill, that his principal objection to the plan, namely, its making

the sinking fund unalienable in time of war, would be obviated by a clause, which he then rose to move, empowering the commissioners to accept as much of any new loan, as they should have money in their hands to pay for *. He informed the house, that he had shewn this clause to Mr. Pitt, who approved it; and he added, with great good humour and liberality, that he hoped this agreement between Mr. Pitt and himself, "would be a good precept and example to posterity to follow."

Mr. Pitt declared, that he felt a singular degree of satisfaction in rising to express his hearty concurrence in the motion of the right honorable gentleman; and he declined, he said, at present entering into any discussion of what might have been the grounds of former differences of opinion respecting the bill, while it remained a matter of speculation: it was enough for him, that in carrying the measure into practice, they agreed. He was peculiarly happy to find a motion of this nature come from the right honorable gentleman, because it proved to him, that the idea he had entertained of the right honorable gentleman's opinion on the subject, was an erroneous one. He had, he confessed, imagined, that the right honorable gentleman objected to the principle of making the fund unalienable, on grounds much less liberal and politic, than those on which it now appeared his opinion rested. He joined with the right honorable gentleman in hoping, that posterity would take an example from the present moment, and persevere in bringing

* Sir John Sinclair, in the third edition of his work upon the Public Revenue, says, "that in the first edition, published in the preceding year, he had recommended a provision similar to this clause of Mr. Fox."

CHAP. VII. 1786.

to perfection what was now begun; and he thought it no inauspicious omen for the ultimate success of the plan, that its propriety and necessity had been so obvious, as to overcome the spirit and prejudice of party, and to create an unanimity and concurrence of sentiment in persons, who, he was sure, more from accident than inclination, were in general of different opinions; and what was still farther remarkable was, that this unanimity was chiefly conspicuous in a part of the business, which, in his judgement, seemed principally calculated to secure permanence and stability to this great and most desirable institution.

The agreement between Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox upon this occasion, appears to have been highly gratifying to both, and the manner in which they expressed themselves, certainly did them great honor; but it is not a little singular, that the clause, which one of these great men suggested, for the purpose of removing by its operation his chief practical objection to the plan, and the other accepted and applauded as tending to give the plan stability, was, in fact, never acted upon, in any one of the numerous and immensely large loans negotiated by different ministers during the war; and that it was first resorted to in 1819 *, at the time of settled peace—an application of the provision in question, which seems never to have entered into the contemplation of Mr. Fox, or of Mr. Pitt.

Mr. Pulteney also proposed a clause, to which Mr. Pitt readily consented, empowering the commissioners to purchase

* This was done under a sort of compulsion, the bank having refused to make the usual advances in favor of the subscribers to the loan.

stock when it should be at or above par, unless they should be otherwise directed by parliament. This case has not at present occurred.

Mr. Dempster, who, though in general an opponent of Mr. Pitt, was a warm friend to this bill, proposed a clause, which, he thought, would make the plan more effective, and give the public creditor additional security. Mr. Pitt was of a different opinion, and the clause was negatived by 109 to 5: this was the only division in either house. Mr. Dempster proposed two other clauses, both of which Mr. Pitt disapproved, and they were rejected.

The bill having passed both houses of parliament without a single dissentient voice, the king, on the 26th of May, went to the house of peers to give the royal assent to it in person*, when the speaker of the house of commons, upon presenting the bill, made the following speech:

"Most gracious sovereign,

"Your faithful commons have passed a bill, intituled, "An Act for vesting certain sums in commissioners, at the end of every quarter of a year, to be by them applied to the reduction of the national debt;" by which they have manifested their attention to your majesty's recommendation, at the opening of this session, for establishing a fixed plan for the reduction of the national debt.

"By the unanimity which attended the last and most important stage of this bill, they have given the most decisive proof,

* This was not usual in the middle of a session, and was caused by the importance of the bill.

CHAP. VII. 1786.

that they have but one heart and one voice, in the maintenance of the public credit, and prosperity of their country.

"The public credit of the nation, which is the result of just and honorable dealing, is now guarded by an additional security. And the future prosperity of this country will effectually be provided for, when it is considered, that, for the purpose of pleading the cause of the continuance of this measure most powerfully with posterity, your faithful commons have, to the justice and good policy of it, added the authority of their own example;—Qui facit, ille jubet.—They have not been discouraged, by the burthens imposed during the last ten years, from submitting in the present time, and in the hour of peace, to new, and the possibility of other, burthens; their object being to attain a situation for their country, more favorable to her defence and glory, in the event of future emergencies.

"A plan so honorable in its principle, and so conducive to the future happiness and safety of the kingdom, must be, in the highest degree, acceptable to the father of his people.—Under that confidence, in the name of all the commons of Great Britain, I tender this bill to your majesty; to which, with all humility, your faithful commons desire your majesty's royal assent."

THUS did Mr. Pitt, who found an annual deficiency of several millions in the revenue, in two years not only raise the income of the country to be equal to its expenditure, but to afford a surplus of a million a year, which he applied, by a plan equally remarkable for its simplicity and efficacy, to the gradual reduction of the national debt; a measure of such acknowledged

importance and merit, that it extinguished all party animosity, and extorted the approbation and concurrence of the most inveterate opponents of his administration: but, wise and salutary as it was considered at the time, it has been productive of infinitely greater and more extensive benefits, than could possibly have been anticipated by human foresight.

We have seen that Mr. Pitt, in opening his plan for the redemption of the national debt, mentioned the great frauds committed upon the revenue in the article of wine, which paid only a custom-house duty; and signified his intention of very soon submitting to parliament, a proposal upon that subject. On a following day, he stated to the house, that for some time there had been a considerable diminution in the quantity of wine legally imported *, although it was certain, that the quantity actually consumed was increased; but, admitting it to be only equal to what it was 36 years since, the revenue suffered an annual loss of 280,000*l.* This defalcation he attributed to two causes, the importation of large quantities of foreign wine without paying the duty, and the sale of a spurious liquor, in which there was little or no genuine wine; the latter of which he looked upon as the principal cause. To remedy these abuses, he proposed to transfer the greater part of the duty upon wines from the customs to the excise; and to make the duty, upon what were called sweets, which were the chief ingredient used in the adulteration of wine, equal to that upon wine. These regulations would be attended with an expense

* In the last 15 years, the quantity annually imported had been diminished six or seven thousand tons.

CHAP. VII. 1786.

to the public of not more than 12 or 13 thousand pounds a year, a sum not to be put in competition with the benefit expected from them; and they would also occasion an addition of 167 excisemen throughout the kingdom, the appointment of whom, as they would be disqualified from voting at the election of members of parliament, and as their salaries would be very small, could not be complained of as a material increase of the influence of the crown. He observed, that it would not be necessary to make the houses of the wholesale dealers in wine liable to the visits of the excise officers, but only their cellars and warehouses; and the retail dealers were already under the excise laws, as they almost universally sold spirituous liquors.

Mr. Pitt trusted, that in endeavoring to augment the income of the country, he should have the support of those who considered it as falling short of the expenditure; and in alluding to the clamors formerly produced, by attempts to extend the excise system, he expressed a hope, that no gentleman would take advantage of obnoxious names, or worn-out prejudices, to create aversion and excite resistance to a measure, which afforded a prospect of such signal advantage, and for which the situation of the country particularly and powerfully called. He added, that the excise was found by experience to be the most effectual and least expensive method of collecting those parts of the revenue, to which it could with propriety be applied; and that, by increasing the consumption of foreign wines, the demand for British manufactures in exchange would also be increased.

Mr. Fox opposed the bill, exerting all the means in his power to render it unpopular; and the wine merchants in London

not only presented a petition against it, to the house of commons *, which was heard by counsel, but they entered into a correspondence with their brethren of the trade in the country, for the purpose of obtaining similar petitions from every part of the kingdom; in which, however, they did not succeed. The objections rested upon two grounds, the difficulty of applying the excise laws to wine, and the impolicy and danger of extending those laws beyond their present limits. The former objection was entirely without foundation, as was then asserted, and afterwards proved by experience; and the latter made no impression either upon the public or upon parliament; there being a general conviction, that the state of the revenue required the adoption of every plan which might tend to its improvement; and the principles of taxation and commerce being better understood than they were in the days of Sir Robert Walpole, who in 1733 proposed to put wine and tobacco under the excise laws, but was compelled to abandon his design by the clamor and opposition it excited. After several debates, and no less than six divisions, in which the minority never exceeded 38, the bill passed the house of commons; and in the house of lords, there was only one short debate, and no division. In that debate it was affirmed, that both Mr. Pelham and Mr. Grenville, when at the head of the treasury, had it in contemplation to subject wine to the excise laws; and that, after full consideration, they relinquished the idea, from ap-

* They also offered a petition to the house of lords, but it was rejected, upon the ground, that no precedent could be found of that house having received a petition against a tax bill.

prehension of the difficulty and odium which would attend the carrying it into execution. In this instance, therefore, Mr. Pitt with great ease succeeded in a measure, in which one of his predecessors, perhaps the ablest of all who had gone before him, entirely failed, and which two others had been afraid to propose, though they were convinced of its expediency.

THE next measure proposed by Mr. Pitt, for the prevention of frauds upon the revenue, was, a bill, since known by the name of the manifest act. False accounts of imported goods were frequently given at the custom-house; and it was also very common, for vessels to sail out of harbour with goods, for which bounties and drawbacks had been obtained, under pretence of their being destined for a foreign market, and to re-land them clandestinely upon some part of the coast of England. To prevent these injurious practices, this bill, among other regulations, ordered, that no goods whatever should be imported into Great Britain, till the master of the vessel had delivered to the proper custom-house officer, a manifest, stating the place where the goods were laden, and containing a full and correct account and description of every part of the cargo, verified upon oath; that no vessel should be allowed to sail from any British port, till the master had given bond of 200 *l.* that no part of the cargo should be illegally re-landed in Great Britain; and that no goods, entitled to bounty or drawback, should be put on board any vessel for exportation, except by persons duly licenced for that purpose, who should deliver them to the revenue officer, stationed on board the

vessel. The bill passed both houses, without any difficulty, and produced a most beneficial effect.

TOWARDS the end of the session, Mr. Pitt brought a bill into the house of commons, for appointing commissioners to inquire into the state and condition of the woods, forests, and land revenue, belonging to the crown, and to sell or alienate fee-farm and other unimproveable rents. The object of this bill was, to ascertain whether the crown lands, which at present afforded very little income, could not be rendered more productive, or be disposed of with advantage to the crown, and to the public. It met with scarcely any resistance in the house of commons; but in the house of lords it was opposed, principally upon the ground of the power given to the commissioners; it was, however, carried by a majority of 28 to 18.

THE sale of tea at the India-house, had, in consequence of the commutation tax, and the different measures taken for the suppression of smuggling, increased from $5\frac{1}{2}$ to 14 millions of pounds, which, with other circumstances, rendered an application to parliament indispensably necessary for an addition to the funds of the company, to enable them to carry on this enlarged trade. A petition for that purpose was presented to the house of commons, on the 25th of May; and it appearing upon inquiry, that the sum wanted was two millions, Mr. Pitt proposed, that it should be raised in the following manner: that the company should be enabled to add 800,000 *l.* to the capital of their stock *, which, at the present price, would

* The present stock of the company was 3,200,000 *l.* and consequently, with this addition, it would be four millions.

CHAP. VII. 1786.

produce 1,200,000*l.*; and also to sell a surplus of 36,000*l.* a year, received from the exchequer, over and above the annuities they paid to their creditors, which would produce 800,000*l.* The bill, giving these powers to the company, caused several debates in both houses; but the only division was in the house of lords, of 14 to 6, in favor of the measure.

It appeared from what Mr. Pitt said in the debate upon the king's speech, that he did not then intend to bring forward any measure in the present session, relative to India; but intelligence and observations soon afterwards received from thence, and a more mature consideration of the subject, suggested several improvements, which might be made in the plan adopted two years before; and therefore a bill for that purpose was prepared and introduced into the house of commons, by Mr. Dundas, president of the board of control, in the middle of March. By the bill of 1784, all measures discussed in council were to be decided by a majority of votes; the governor general, when the members were equally divided, having a casting vote: it was now proposed to authorize the governor general, "in cases of high importance," to act according to his own judgment, although the other three members of the council should differ from him: and it was farther proposed, to enable the directors, whenever they should think it expedient, to unite the offices of governor general and commander in chief in the same person: the object of which regulation was, to prevent the bad effect of divisions in the council, and to give greater energy, vigor, and dispatch to the government in India, by increasing the power of the governor general. By the bill of 1784, the commander in chief was ex officio

a member of the council: it was now proposed to leave it to the directors to appoint the commander in chief, when different from the governor general, a member of the council or not, as they should think proper; since a person might be fit to command an army, without having the necessary qualifications for a member of the council: similar regulations were to take place with respect to Madras and Bombay.—The bill of 1784, directed, that the members of the councils, in the different presidencies, should be appointed from the servants of the company then in India: it was now proposed, that the former or present servants of the company, whether then in India or not, should also be capable of being appointed to seats in the respective councils; and that the governors of the presidencies, in case of a vacancy, by death or otherwise, in their councils, should be empowered to nominate a temporary successor, who should continue till the vacancy should be duly supplied by the directors, instead of the oldest person in the service, as directed by the bill of 1784, succeeding as matter of course, who might or might not be qualified for the situation; but no person was to be appointed, either permanently or for a time, who had not been 12 years resident in India in the company's service.—By the bill of 1784, the servants of the company were necessarily to rise, in regular gradation, which might obviously, in some cases, be attended with inconvenience: and therefore it was now proposed, that any of the company's servants might be appointed to vacant offices, provided they had been in the service of the company in India a certain number of years, according to the value of the respective offices.—Those parts of the bill of 1784, which

CHAP. VII. 1786.

required from the servants of the company returning from India, a disclosure of all their property upon oath, being extremely disliked and loudly complained of, the repeal of all the clauses relating to that subject was now proposed; and lastly, it was proposed to make several alterations in the court of judicature, and in the mode of trial of persons charged with the commission of crimes and misdemeanors in India.

This bill was strongly objected to by Mr. Fox and Mr. Burke; and at the suggestion of Mr. Sheridan, it was divided into two bills, with a view that the provisions, which related to the government in India, and those which related to the court of judicature and mode of trial in England, subjects distinct and not necessarily dependent upon each other, might be separately considered. Upon the first point it was contended, that to authorize the governor general to act without the concurrence of a single member of his council, would be to establish an arbitrary government in our Indian possessions: to which Mr. Dundas replied, that it behoved those, who maintained that opinion, to prove, that arbitrary government depended more upon one person governing, than two; a position, which, he believed, it would not be easy to make out. He had ever considered the governing by known laws, as the preservation and security of all the rights and franchises of subjects; and trial, in all cases of property, by the established judicature of the country, and the free exercise of public and private opinion, moral, political, and religious, as the invariable and undoubted proof of freedom. While these remained, the liberties of the people would surely be as perfectly enjoyed as ever they had been, or were likely to be: this was the real situation of the case in

India. The person, entrusted with the administration of the country, was indeed invested with more power; but he had, therefore, the greater responsibilty. Though in cases of great emergency, he was allowed to act without the concurrence of his council, yet he had still his council to advise with, and they were always about him, as checks and controls upon his conduct. In fact, the governor could do no more under the proposed clause, than he could have done before, with the concurrence of one member of his council. On this occasion he should beg leave to remind the committee, of the essential difference between a cabinet council and a popular legislative assembly of debate; in the latter, party difference produced variety of opinion and variety of discussion; all of which tended to elucidate what was obscure, to ascertain what was doubtful, and to digest and mature what was crude and unformed. Hence, in proportion as that house debated a question, it became more thoroughly understood; and they all, let them be of what party they might, were better prepared to decide upon it ultimately. The case was widely otherwise in respect to a council of executive government: in such an assembly, the fewer the voices, the less the party feeling; and the greater the unanimity, the better the decision, the more vigorous the execution of the measure decided upon, and the more probable its success. All the mischiefs, and all the misfortunes, which had for years taken place in India, he was satisfied in his own mind, after long and attentive inquiry into the affairs of that country, arose entirely from the party principles of the members of the different councils, and the factious scenes, which those councils had almost uniformly presented. The proposed

CHAP. VII. 1786.

alterations were, therefore, justified upon the grounds of policy and necessity; and he trusted the house would lay out of their minds all prejudice and false coloring, and look at the real question. This being examined, with cool impartiality, all ideas must be rejected of what had been so ingeniously described as a ministerial design to establish a despotic government in the East Indies.

Mr. Pitt, in arguing upon the same principles, said, that the responsibility was made more broad and comprehensive, on the part of the governor general, by the fresh powers given him in the bill; and in fact, the very institution of those powers created the additional degree of responsibility, and made it more strongly attach upon his conduct; for it was not an arbitrary power put into his hands, subject to no check or control, which was the true meaning of the term arbitrary power: it was only a discretionary power, to be exercised in cases of great and urgent importance, and that under the most forcible restraints, and the strongest guards which could be imagined. In the first place, all the consultations on the subject, whatever it might be, on which the governor was to exercise his new authority, were to be recorded; and his reasons for differing in opinion from his council, were also to be entered on the minutes, together with an account of the circumstances, confirmed and sanctioned with the solemnity of an oath, which made him think it necessary to take such a step; and with those were to be contrasted the arguments of each of the dissenting members of the council, which they were required to enter by way of protest, for their own justification; and the whole was to be sent home and to be laid

before the court of directors. With respect to the doctrines advanced on the subject of arbitrary power; he felt himself fully justified in contending, that oppression and tyranny did not arise from the number of the persons to whom power was entrusted, but from want of a proper check and control, to which those persons should be liable in the exercise of their authority. To illustrate this, he instanced the British constitution, in which the number of 500 persons in that house, and a considerable number of peers in the other, would not be a sufficient security for the liberties of the people, were it not, that the individuals, who composed those assemblies, were a part of that people, and the moment they passed any law, became themselves bound by it, in common with the rest of their fellow-subjects. That house, in particular, was restrained from the exercise of such a power, by the nature of its constitution, being in a great measure, though not so much as he and every other friend to the liberties of the country must wish, elected by the people. But take away those circumstances of representation, however imperfect, in one house, and a community of interest with the rest of the nation in both, and their numbers would afford no security whatever against the exercise of despotic and arbitrary government. Nay, in large bodies there was greater danger to be apprehended of such strides of despotism, because in them the responsibility would prove less binding, by being divided among so many persons; whereas, in the present case, being confined to one, it was made an unsurmountable barrier and restraint.

In replying to that part of Mr. Fox's speech, in which he had reproached him with having changed his sentiments upon the

subject of the powers, which ought to be vested in the governor general, Mr. Pitt observed, that it was his singular misfortune, as the views of his opponents made it most instrumental to their purposes, to labor alternately under opposite and contradictory charges: at one time he was accused of a presumptuous and obstinate adherence to his own opinions and proposals, and at another, of a too ready departure from them: of the two faults, the latter was that of which he should the more willingly acknowledge himself to be guilty; for, to sacrifice the interests of his country to the pride of persevering in his own opinions, would indeed be a most flagrant breach of his duty to the public; but to change them, when experience or argument, or a more close investigation, had shewn them to be wrong, was, he should humbly conceive, rather a source of commendation than of censure. In this instance, however, he had not departed from any of his principles, but had, on the contrary, given them a greater force and efficacy in the bill then before the house. He had always entertained an opinion, that the authority of the governor general ought to be put on a different footing from what it had been, as many evils resulted from the parity of power between him and the rest of the council. In the former bill, therefore, his power had been enlarged, by diminishing the number of his council *, that so the concurrence of one of its members would prove sufficient to give him

* By lord North's bill of 1773, the supreme council of Bengal consisted of the governor general, and four other members; and the governor general, to carry any point, must have the concurrence of two other members of the council.

a majority, and his casting vote would be more frequently exercised with effect; and in the present bill, the same principle was still adhered to, and farther followed up, by giving him a power, in extraordinary emergencies, but with numberless checks added, to prevent a wanton and corrupt exercise of that power, of superseding, by his single authority, the votes of the rest of the board. Gentlemen had pretended to treat with ridicule, the idea of imposing an oath on the governor general, whenever he should think proper to avail himself of this new-created power. But did such gentlemen really think, or did they feel, that an oath was no restraint; or did they, when they were complaining of the power itself, seriously object to circumscribing it with restraints and limits? It was surely good policy, to guard, as much as possible, against the misconduct of persons entrusted with power, to provide as many restraints as the nature of the service would admit, and to render the wilful commission of any crime or error as difficult as possible.

Though the provisions of the other bill were not specifically objected to, the members in opposition took this opportunity of repeating their invectives and complaints against depriving persons, accused of misconduct in India, of a trial by jury, "the unalienable birthright of every English subject;" but their present endeavors to excite dissatisfaction upon this point, were as ineffectual as upon the former occasion. The two bills, after several debates and divisions, in which the majorities were very large, passed both houses of parliament.

THE preparatory steps relative to the impeachment of Mr. Hastings, a proceeding in which Mr. Pitt took so active a part,

CHAP. VII. 1786.

that it will be necessary to notice it in some detail, constitute the only business which remains to be mentioned in the present session. Mr. Hastings, who, at an early period of life, went out to India, as a writer *, and afterwards filled several important stations in the service of the company, was appointed governor general of India, by the act of parliament, which passed in 1773, when lord North was at the head of the treasury, for regulating the government of the British territories in the east. In May 1776, the court of directors of the East India company, in consequence of complaints received from India, and at the suggestion of lord North, voted that he should be removed from his government; but this vote was overruled by a majority of the court of proprietors; and no farther step was then taken. Not long afterwards, Mr. Grant and Mr. Macleane came from India, and asserted, that they were authorized to offer Mr. Hastings's resignation to the court of directors, which was accepted; and Mr. Wheeler was appointed to succeed him; but, upon the return of those gentlemen to Calcutta, Mr. Hastings denied that he had given them any such authority; and, refusing to resign, continued in his government, to which he was re-appointed, by act of parliament, no less than three times during lord North's administration, namely, in 1779, 1780, and 1781 †. Several of the

* Mr. Hastings was appointed a writer in 1749. He returned to England in 1765 with a moderate fortune, and remained here till 1769. In that year he went again to India as second in council at Madras; and in 1772 he was placed at the head of the government of Bengal under the old system, having no jurisdiction over the other British settlements.

† In 1773 Mr. Hastings was appointed for five years, in 1779 and 1780 for one year, and in 1781 for ten years.

resolutions* proposed by Mr. Dundas, as chairman of the secret committee, in 1782, conveyed a strong censure upon Mr. Hastings; and one† of them declared, that "Warren Hastings, esquire, governor general of Bengal, having, in sundry instances, acted in a manner repugnant to the honor and policy of this nation, and thereby brought great calamities on India, and enormous expenses on the East India company, it is the duty of the directors of the said company, to pursue all legal and effectual means for the removal of the said governor general from his office, and to recal him to Great Britain." The directors accordingly voted the removal and recal of Mr. Hastings‡; but the proprietors again interposed their authority, in opposition§ to the vote of the directors; and parliament taking no farther step, he remained governor general till February 1785, when, without any previous notice to the company, he embarked for England. On his arrival in this country, in the following June, the directors voted him their thanks for his long‖ and meritorious services, although they had frequently and loudly complained of his conduct in India, and of his utter disregard to their orders. And Mr. Dundas, who, besides moving the resolutions which have been mentioned, said in 1782, that "Mr. Hastings scarcely

* The 18th, 35th, 39th, 40th, 42d and 44th,

† The 45th.

‡ By a majority of 13 to 10.

§ The majority in the court of proprietors in favor of Mr. Hastings, was very large, the numbers being 428 and 75: this voting took place November 1st 1782.

‖ Mr. Hastings had been twelve years governor general in India, and more than thirty in the service of the company.

ever left the walls of Calcutta, that his steps were not followed by the deposition of some prince, the desertion of some ally, or the depopulation of some country," now declared, in the house of commons, "that if he had been a director, he would undoubtedly have concurred in that vote; and he expressed his satisfaction and joy, that the resolution, which he had himself moved, for the recal of Mr. Hastings, had not been carried into effect; because, in that case, he should have been the means of depriving the company of a most valuable and useful servant, and the public of a governor general in India distinguished by the most uncommon ardor, abilities, and capacity." These favorable testimonies, from parties formerly adverse to him, must have highly gratified Mr. Hastings upon his return to his native country: from another quarter he met with a very different reception.

In the numerous debates, which took place in the house of commons upon the state of the British territories in the East, Mr. Burke, who had been a very diligent member of the select committee, and had for many years bestowed great attention upon the transactions in India, seized every opportunity to reprobate and condemn the measures of Mr. Hastings, in terms, which scarcely any degree of criminality would have justified; imputing to his mismanagement all the difficulties and distresses in our Indian concerns; accusing him of peculation, cruelty, and tyranny; and denominating him "a delinquent of the first magnitude." In every session subsequent to the reports of the two committees, he assured the house, that he would bring him to justice for his various and heinous offences; and particularly, a few days after Mr. Hastings's arrival in

England, he pledged himself to commence a criminal prosecution against him early in the next session.

On the 24th of January 1786, the day on which parliament met, Major Scott, who had been a confidential agent of Mr. Hastings in India, and was now a member of the house of commons, reminded Mr. Burke of his engagement, and called upon him to produce his promised accusation of the late governor general of Bengal. Major Scott was probably induced to throw out this challenge, by inferring, from the language held by Mr. Dundas, that Mr. Hastings, if attacked, would have the support of administration; and by thinking, that this bold step was likely to make an impression upon the house favorable to Mr. Hastings, as proceeding from his consciousness of innocence. Mr. Fox immediately observed, that if Mr. Burke should so far forget his duty as not to fulfil his promise, Major Scott might assure himself, that other members would institute an inquiry into the conduct of Mr. Hastings; which declaration sufficiently indicated, that the prosecution, if undertaken, would be supported by the whole power of opposition. Mr. Burke, on this day, entered into no explanation of his intention; but on Monday the 13th of February he gave notice, that he should, on the Friday following, move for the production of certain papers, which he conceived to be necessary to substantiate a charge he had long had in contemplation, and which he had been challenged to bring forward, by a gentleman, closely connected with the party to be accused. "He looked upon the business, he said, as the greatest and most important criminal prosecution, that ever had engaged the attention of any human tribunal."

CHAP. VII. 1786.

It has been mentioned, that Mr. Pitt was not a member either of the select or secret committee, and that he took no part in the debates immediately caused by their reports. Nor had he delivered an opinion upon any of the measures of Mr. Hastings's government, which had been frequently the subject of discussion in the house of commons, in the course of the last four years. His mind was perfectly free from all bias and prejudice; and though he observed, that his political opponents were entering upon the prosecution with great warmth and eagerness, and he knew that some of his own friends were zealous admirers of Mr. Hastings, he determined to act with that candor and impartiality, which are peculiarly due to every question of a judicial nature, and with a just regard to the honor of the country, which could not but be involved in the decision of parliament upon the conduct of a person, who had filled the important station of governor general of India, for so long a period as twelve years, and against whom such numerous and heavy accusations were so confidently urged. He lamented, indeed, that the situation he enjoyed, and his duty to the public, would not allow him to be neuter; but finding, that the inquiry must lead to the consideration of many points of great national concern, he made himself master of Indian history and politics; and in every part of the proceeding, displayed his accustomed ability and discernment.

On the 17th of February the day appointed, Mr. Burke, after acquainting the house, that the mode, by which he proposed to bring Mr. Hastings to trial, would be by impeachment at the bar of the house of lords, moved for certain papers as

the ground of his intended accusation. Mr. Pitt, in giving his assent to this motion, said, he hoped Mr. Burke would, as early as possible, state explicitly the nature and extent of his charges against Mr. Hastings; and apprised him, that if he should move for any papers not mentioned in the reports of the select or secret committee, he should expect him to explain the substance of them, and the purposes for which they were desired. Mr. Pitt assented to several other motions of Mr. Burke, of a similar nature; but, at last, he moved for papers, to the production of which, Mr. Pitt declared, that he could not agree: the sudden illness, however, of the speaker, made it necessary to adjourn, without coming to any decision. On the following day, Mr. Burke withdrew the motion, to which Mr. Pitt had objected; and made sixteen other motions for papers, all of which were granted. The next day, he moved for letters, and a variety of papers, relative to the treaty of peace with the Mahrattas, in 1783, to the production of which, Mr. Dundas objected, upon the ground, that their contents, if made public, would occasion transactions to be known, which ought, from motives of the soundest policy, to remain secret; and he was the more determined to resist these motions, as the peace, to which they referred, had never been the subject of complaint, but had merited, and received, every man's applause. The benefits arising from it were, he said, great: it was, in fact, "the salvation of the British empire in Asia." Mr. Fox supported Mr. Burke, with his usual warmth; but Mr. Pitt, concurring with Mr. Dundas, observed, that disposed as he was to act through the whole business with the utmost impartiality, he could see nothing in the conduct of Mr. Hastings, respecting the

CHAP. VII. 1786.

Mahratta peace, which did not deserve the highest commendation. He had, indeed, effected it, by dissolving a league of the most powerful Indian princes, who had entered into a confederacy for our destruction; and he was astonished, that any one, conversant with such subjects, could think of censuring so successful and glorious an atchievement. Mr. Hastings made peace, at a time, when the continuance of war would have proved absolute and inevitable ruin to the affairs of the company; and he completed it, with an address and ingenuity, which did him immortal honor. How far other charges might be substantiated against him, remained to be determined. If the papers now called for, were granted, there would ensue various discoveries, which might be injurious to our interests, and fatal to our officers, in India. There were certainly means used to detach the different princes from each other; but to reveal those means, and to make known the persons through whom they operated, would destroy the confidence of the native powers in British politics, and weaken their faith in negotiation, which it was essential to the prosperity of this country, to preserve inviolate: it might be a bar to all future attempts of this kind, and affect the situations of persons, who were instrumental in bringing about the great object in question. One, however, of Mr. Burke's motions, he should be ready to support, because, in that case, there was sufficient ground for inquiry; he meant that respecting the Ranna of Gohud. In whatever degree he might differ from him, as to the propriety of excluding the Ranna from the peace, he certainly thought that exclusion a fit subject for investigation. This man, he understood, previously to the Mahratta peace, had entered into

a separate negotiation with Moodhajee Scindia, without the concurrence or knowledge of the governor general of Bengal. After being detected in this act of infidelity, it was no wonder, that he should not be admitted to the benefit of a peace, which was meant to serve the friends, and not the foes, of Great Britain. But though he believed this fact to be true, he should make no opposition to the motion for papers upon the subject, because they might be granted without any private injury, or public danger. Mr. Burke's first motion was rejected by a majority of 87 to 44; his second motion was withdrawn; his third was rejected by a majority of 76 to 34; his fourth, relating to the Ranna of Gohud, passed unanimously; and upon his making a fifth, relative to negotiations with the Great Mogul at Delhi, upon the subject of the same peace, the order of the day was moved, which was carried unanimously; and, soon after, the house adjourned.

On the 6th of March, Mr. Burke repeated his motion for the Delhi papers; and upon Mr. Pitt's again objecting to it, as tending to affect the policy of India, by revealing the secrets of negotiations, which the peace and tranquillity of Indostan rendered absolutely necessary should remain undivulged, it was rejected by a majority of 88 to 34. Several motions were made for other papers, most of which were granted; but some few were refused, upon the principle already mentioned.

A third attempt was made, by Mr. Fox, to obtain the production of the Delhi papers; and in the debate which followed, Mr. Pitt once more assured the house, that the disclosure of these papers would operate in a manner injurious to our interests, by exposing the objects and considerations by which

the princes of India had been respectively governed in their arrangements with us: at the same time, as these papers, instead of furnishing matter of accusation against Mr. Hastings, would place, in a conspicuous point of view, the most meritorious and brilliant part of his administration, he could not avoid, from motives of compassion and justice, lamenting, that in compliance with his duty, he must persevere in objecting to their production: the motion was rejected by 140 to 73.

After several discussions relative to the order of proceeding, it was determined, contrary to the wishes of Mr. Burke and Mr. Fox, that the charges should be produced, and Mr. Hastings heard in his defence, previously to the receiving any parole evidence. Upon these points there was only one division, in which Mr. Pitt voted in a majority of 140 to 80. On four different days in April, Mr. Burke delivered to the house, 21 articles*, charging Mr. Hastings with sundry high crimes and misdemeanors; and on the 1st and 2nd of May, Mr. Hastings, who had been furnished with copies of these articles, as they were produced, read his answers to them at the bar of the house, which were afterwards laid upon the table. On the 5th of May, Mr. Burke produced his 22nd and last charge, to which Mr. Hastings made his reply a few days afterwards. The examination of witnesses lasted three weeks; towards the end of which time, Mr. Burke declared his intention to adopt the suggestion of Mr. Pitt, and take the sense of the house upon each charge separately, whether it contained sufficient ground for impeachment, or not?

* These charges were drawn up in so diffuse a manner, that they fill nearly 100 folio pages in the journals.

Accordingly on the 1st of June, Mr. Burke brought forward his first charge, which related to the Rohilla war; in the commencement and conduct of which, he asserted, that Mr. Hastings had been "guilty of gross, enormous, and flagitious crimes." At a late hour the debate was adjourned to the next day; and after another long debate, the motion was negatived by a majority of 119 to 67. Mr. Pitt did not speak on either day, except to propose an amendment in the words of the motion *, which was adopted. He voted in the majority, coinciding in opinion with Mr. Dundas and Mr. William Grenville, who contended that the war with the Rohillas, as far as Mr. Hastings was concerned, was both just and politic; just, inasmuch as it originated on the part of the Rohillas, in the violation of a treaty subsisting between them and Sujah Dowlah the nabob vizier of Oude, to which our East India company was guarantee; and politic, inasmuch as it conduced to our interests in India, to strengthen and support the vizier, whose dominions were a barrier against the Mahrattas, a neighboring and powerful state, unfavorably disposed to the English: and they farther maintained, that the expulsion of the Rohillas, a faithless and dangerous people, from the country which they had occupied only about 40 years, was justifiable, and could not be considered as an extirpation, a term which had been applied to it by the accusers of Mr. Hastings; that Mr. Hastings was not responsible for any act of cruelty, of which Sujah

* The motion when amended was as follows, "That the committee having considered the said article, and examined evidence on the same, are of opinion, that there are grounds sufficient to charge Warren Hastings, esq. with high crimes and misdemeanors upon the matter of the said article."

Dowlah might be guilty in the prosecution of the war; that it was unfair to call a person to account for transactions, which had taken place at the distance of 13 years; and that, in truth, Mr. Hastings had, by implication at least, been acquitted of any blame respecting the Rohilla war, by having been three times re-appointed governor general of Bengal by parliament since its conclusion*: this Mr. Pitt, upon another occasion, called "the highest certificate of legislative approbation."

On the 13th of June, Mr. Fox brought forward the charge relative to Cheyt Sing, the rajah of Benares, which stood third in the list; and in his speech, he accused Mr. Hastings of having made unjust demands of money and troops from the rajah; of his having imposed upon him, a most exorbitant fine, in consequence of his hesitation to comply with those demands; and of his having arrested him in his own palace, and treated him with the greatest indignity and cruelty. He concluded an able, but violent, speech, by moving that, "this committee are of opinion, that having examined the third charge, and heard evidence thereupon, there is matter of impeachment against Warren Hastings, esq. contained in it."

After Mr. Francis had seconded the motion, and Mr. Nicholls had spoken against it, Mr. Pitt began a long argumentative speech, by assuring the house, that he had listened with the most fixed and anxious attention, to what had been asserted by those who had preceded him in the debate, not only because he looked upon the subject as of the utmost magnitude, from

* The Rohilla peace was signed October 6, 1774. Lord North who introduced these acts, voted for this motion

its involving, in a great degree, both the honor and dignity of the British house of commons, and also the general cause of justice and humanity; but, because he had heard upon both sides of the question, many arguments and doctrines, to which he could not subscribe, and from which, he found himself indispensably bound to express his dissent. He felt the greatest difficulty and uneasiness, in being obliged to determine on judicial questions, the merits of which were so closely connected with Indian notions and habits, and that with the insurmountable impression of sentiments and principles imbibed and matured under the British constitution. In proportion, however, to this difficulty, had been his endeavor to make himself perfectly master of the whole of the case; and although from his other avocations, he was, perhaps, less at liberty to dedicate a considerable portion of his time to the study of it, than most other gentlemen in that house, yet, he could venture to say, he had, by a most laborious investigation, been able to form such a final and settled opinion concerning it, as had completely satisfied him, with respect to the vote, which, in conscience, he was bound to give. He should state to the committee, in as plain and concise a manner as he possibly could, the whole of the premises which operated on his mind, in forming his conclusion; and this he should do without any restraint from the apprehension, that his arguments might be used or perverted to a result different from that which he intended: for he thought, that if there was any one subject, in which a member of that house was bound to use less disguise, and to speak out more plainly, than on another, it was on such a subject as that then under discussion, where

there ought to be no object in view, but the honor of parliament, and the ends of substantial justice, as necessarily and inseparably connected in the question. He should, therefore, take care to avoid entering into the business with that sort of temper and spirit, by which some gentlemen seemed to be influenced, and should particularly guard against any impression similar to that, which the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Fox) had been so desirous of making upon the house, in a manner, which, he thought, of all others, the most unfair and most inconsistent with every principle of law and justice, by torturing the words and arguments of a man standing on his defence, and drawing from them inferences of motives and of principles calculated to fix upon him, in many instances, a degree of guilt, which even the charges themselves did not impute. He should not suffer such means to bias him in voting a censure, where he did not think censure was merited; nor should he, on the other hand, suffer his indignation, at such unjustifiable conduct, so far to prevail, as to make him refuse such a vote, where he thought he was conscientiously bound to give it.

He should begin, by stating to the house, his general opinion as to the situation of the zemindars of India, and the degree of subjection under which they lie to their superior lords. He had made every research in his power, into this part of the subject; and, as far as it was possible to ascertain in England, a question of Indian politics, liable even there to great uncertainty, and variety of interpretation, he hoped that he had been successful.

Mr. Pitt then went into the general doctrine of subordinate

principalities, pointing out the nature and extent of their subjection to the superior state, and the necessary dependance to which they must, in all cases, be liable. Many different opinions, he said, had been entertained concerning the tenure, under which the zemindars of the empire of Indostan held their possessions; some had supposed them the real proprietors of the soil, while others looked upon them, as mere trustees for the superior lord, and entitled to no part of the produce or value of the lands, except such as were allotted to them, for their subsistence. Some had conceived them to be possessed of a life estate only, and to be the mere channels or vehicles of the revenue; while others contended, that their interest was hereditary. It was, however, of very little consequence to the conclusion, which he meant to draw, what was the precise character of their tenure. It was enough for him, that it must in the nature of things, and from a number of special circumstances, become liable to demands for certain extraordinary aids, in case of extraordinary emergencies. It was impossible to suppose the existence of any state, which had no provision made for extraordinary resources, in case of extraordinary dangers. The most common, because the most obvious, mode of procuring this extraordinary resource, had, in the earliest periods of the feudal institutions, been, by calling on the several vassals of the state for their personal service in arms. This right was a fundamental maxim in every government, and one to which no individual could possibly object, because it was by the joint power of the whole aggregate body alone, that the person and property of the individual could be protected; and it would be a treason against itself, in any state, to exclude

CHAP. VII. 1786.

a principle, so obviously necessary to its very existence. Those personal services of the tenants of land, became, in time, almost universally commutable for money, which was found better to answer both the exigencies of government, and the convenience of individuals; and from hence the principle, which had formerly applied to the persons, was extended to the property of the people, and each was considered as bound to contribute, in proportion to the benefits which he derived from his political capacity, as a member of a regular community, that is, in proportion to the possessions he held under it. He instanced this from the policy of the original feudal institutions of Europe, and particularly, of England, in the case of sudden danger, when, over and above the stated rents and services reserved to the crown, there was a right to call upon the tenants for particular and extraordinary service, either of a personal or pecuniary nature; and from such demands, even the counties palatine were not exempted, although the proprietors had the exercise of every species of internal jurisdiction within them, in as ample a manner as any of the Indian zemindars. He then applied his argument more particulary to the empire of Hindostan, where, he said, the same policy had been adopted and practised; and, after referring to several undoubted facts, and quoting written grants to zemindars, he declared it to be his firm conviction, that the zemindars of India were bound, on all occasions of great emergency to contribute, in a proportion suitable to their own ability, and the exigency of the public.

The next question then to be considered was, whether any particular stipulations had been made in favor of Cheyt Sing

which ought to exempt him from the general duty incumbent upon all the other tributaries to the Indian sovereigns. Mr. Pitt pursued this inquiry, by shewing, that the zemindary of Benares had been acquired by Bulwant Sing from the nabob of Oude, to whom, by the original appointment, an annual rent was reserved; besides which, extraordinary aids had been furnished to him, as lord paramount, on extraordinary occasions. Upon the death of Bulwant Sing, his son, Cheyt Sing, was, by the mediation of the company, admitted to the succession; with an addition, however, of two lacks of rupees to his annual tribute, and a fine of several lacks, paid at the time; and this very Cheyt Sing had himself contributed to his superior, the nabob, a considerable assistance, both in men and money, towards the Rohilla expedition. Afterwards, the sovereignty of Benares was surrendered to the company, who, by such surrender, became possessed of every right which the nabob had hitherto enjoyed in the country, and of every degree of authority which he had possessed over the zemindar. Among those rights and authorities, was that of calling, in case of emergency, for assistance over and above the amount of the stipulated and regular annual payments. This right had always been exercised and acquiesced in, and was indisputably transferred, with other rights, to the company.

Mr. Pitt then stated, that several patents had been granted by the English government in Bengal, by which certain powers and immunities were conveyed to Cheyt Sing; but so far were they from rendering him independent, that it was expressly determined, upon the suggestion of Mr. Francis, when he was a member of the supreme council, and Mr. Hastings governor

general, that the rajah should still be kept in a state of vassalage or dependence upon the company. In none of these patents was there any mention of that, which was too essential and indispensable a right of sovereignty to be either construed away by implication, or defeated by any thing short of the most explicit renunciation—the right of demanding aid in case of war, or upon any other great emergency; but, on the contrary, this very right was, in a great measure, recognized by the terms of the grant; for it expressly conveyed the country to the zemindar, on the condition, that, if he yielded a fit obedience to the authority of the company, his superiors and sovereigns, then he should hold the territory for the annual sum mentioned in the deed. The real situation, therefore, of Cheyt Sing was this; that he stood ensured from any increase of his jummah, or annual tribute, but continued liable, according to his ability, to demands for the service of the company, his sovereigns, on any pressing emergency.

Having established these two points respecting zemindars in general, and Cheyt Sing in particular, Mr. Pitt said, that the third thing to be considered, was, whether the situation of the affairs of the company in India, constituted an emergency sufficient to justify the exercise of that right of sovereignty, which Mr. Hastings exercised in making the extraordinary demand on the rajah? To this he should say but few words, because the adversaries of Mr. Hastings seemed industriously anxious to impress the public with an idea of the magnitude of the danger, to which our eastern government was at that time exposed. They all represented, that, superadded to the war, which broke out with France, there were sufficient grounds for

the most alarming apprehensions, from the animosities and resentments of the adjacent country powers.

A fourth consideration was, whether admitting the right of calling for extraordinary aid, to meet extraordinary emergencies, and that the then situation of the company constituted such an emergency, the sum demanded from Cheyt Sing was greater than he could with ease and convenience have paid? He should not take upon himself to say, whether the governor general and council had formed their calculation of the ability of the rajah, on proper information; but from the event it was evident, that the sum demanded from him* was greatly within his power to have paid: for in the castle of Bridgigor were found, besides what possibly had been conveyed away privately, at least 23 lacks of rupees in specie and jewels, and other moveables, to the value of a crore and half of rupees, which was a million and half of our money. And that the demand of a thousand or even fifteen hundred cavalry was not enormous, or beyond the power of the rajah to comply with, was evident from the circumstances which took place afterwards on the insurrection in Benares; from whence it appeared, that Cheyt Sing had a force fully sufficient to enable him to spare the number required on behalf of his sovereigns and benefactors.

Thus, he trusted, he had fairly made it out on grounds perfectly just and reasonable, that there was a right in the council of Bengal to make a demand on Cheyt Sing, for assistance and aid towards the defence of the company's interests in Bengal, threatened as they were with a most dangerous combination of

* The sum demanded was five lacks of rupees.

enemies; and also, that the aid demanded was by no means extravagant, when compared with the well-known ability of Cheyt Sing to pay it. He should, therefore, leave those points as proved and admitted, and proceed to the other circumstances, which constituted the remainder, and, in his opinion, the best founded parts of the charge.

He repeated, that he perceived himself under a very disagreeable necessity of adapting, in some degree, his sentiments on the subject of government, to the principles of Indian politics. Those principles were certainly not conformable to European ideas, but they were in a great measure the only ones on which an European could take upon himself to judge of the transactions and conduct of an Indian governor. They were the principles of arbitrary power and despotism. But though the constitution of our eastern possessions was arbitrary and despotic, still it was the duty of every administration in that country, to conduct itself by the rules of justice and moderation, as far as it was possible to reconcile them to the established government. He did not care whether the laws of Tamerlane, or of any other Indian emperor, had laid down such a doctrine: it was enforced by a higher authority. And it was upon that ground that he felt it impossible to acquit Mr. Hastings of the whole of the charge brought against him; for he felt in his conscience, that he (Mr. Hastings) had pushed the exercise of that arbitrary discretion, which, from the nature of the eastern government, was intrusted to him, to a greater length than he was warranted to do by the necessity of the service. He was firmly persuaded, that Mr Hastings had been influenced through the whole of his government, by

the warmest zeal for the interest of his employers; but that zeal, however commendable in itself, lost its merit, when exerted in a manner repugnant to principles, which ought not to give way to any motives of interest or policy whatsoever *. The council of Bengal, having made a demand, which they had a right to make, and that demand having been contumaciously resisted, they were certainly justifiable in inflicting a punishment on the delinquent party; for to give the right of demanding, without the power of punishing the refusal, would be absurd and nugatory in the extreme. But then it was their duty to apportion the punishment to the degree of guilt; this, he was sorry to say, Mr. Hastings, in his opinion, had not done. The conduct of Mr. Hastings, subsequent to the demand of troops and money from Cheyt Sing, was censurable, inasmuch as the fine, which he determined to levy, was beyond all proportion exorbitant, unjust, and tyrannical. In fining the rajah 500,000 *l.* for a mere delay to pay 50,000 *l.* which 50,000 *l.* he had actually paid, Mr. Hastings had acted in an arbitrary manner, and was not guided by any principle of justice and reason. This proceeding destroyed all relation and connection between the degrees of guilt and punishment; it was grinding, it was overbearing. He should therefore, certainly, in the present charge, agree to the motion which had been made; not considering himself as being thereby committed to a final vote of impeachment, but only meaning to be undersood, that if, upon the whole of the charges, it should be his opinion, that an im-

* In no instance did Mr. Pitt, either in his own conduct, or in judging of that of others, lose sight of the strict rules of justice and morality.

peachment ought to be preferred against Mr. Hastings, then this act of oppression was such, as ought to be made one of the articles of that impeachment, being in his judgment a high crime and misdemeanor. In all this he meant to confine himself expressly to the exorbitancy of the fine, and not to include the subsequent revolution of Benares, an event, which, under all the circumstances, could not possibly have been avoided: for Cheyt Sing, having reluctantly obeyed in one instance (the payment of the money) the orders of the council, after making false and contumacious excuses, his pretence of inability being certainly of that description, and having actually disobeyed another part of their commands (the furnishing of a certain number of troops) the governor was unquestionably at liberty, not only to impose a fine upon him, but to march into his country, in order to enforce it; and the rajah, not being acquainted from any overt-act, that the fine intended to be levied, was exorbitant (the only unjust part of the transaction,) his taking up arms, in order to escape from an arrest, to which he had subjected himself by his own fault, and exciting an insurrection among his men to massacre the British forces, and afterwards withdrawing himself and going into open rebellion, which could not be excused by any consideration of that with which he was not acquainted, the exorbitancy of the fine—all these circumstances considered, Mr. Hastings's deposition of the rajah was just and indispensably necessary, and naturally followed from what had preceded it. As to Mr. Hastings's encouraging the troops to commit ravage and devastation, that could not have been the consequence of the letter, to which it was imputed; for, that letter was only cal-

culated for the private perusal of the council; and it was a well-known fact, and sufficiently authenticated by evidence, that he had taken every precaution for issuing the necessary orders to prevent any avoidable licentiousness of the soldiery; and that the cruelties committed, were only by a party of disobedient and mutinous followers of the camp.

To the subsequent part of the charge, the second and third revolution of Benares, he should say but a few words, as they had not been much relied upon, except as matter of aggravation. On the head of the last-mentioned articles, the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Fox) had attempted to point out a contradiction between the different parts of Mr. Hastings's conduct, in having first deposed Cheyt Sing for not paying a certain sum of money, and afterwards deposing Jagher Deo Sheo for using rigorous modes of collection, in order to enable himself to comply with a similar demand. In both cases Mr. Hastings was strictly right in his principles; for one rajah deserved to be punished for not paying what he was able and bound in duty to pay; and the other was equally culpable in not making a proper collection of the revenue, but laying it on in a partial and unfair manner.

The only remaining subject was, the restoration of Cheyt Sing to his possessions; upon which he should forbear to deliver any opinion, as it could not then properly come under consideration.

Not one of the persons who were adverse to Mr. Hastings, attempted to answer any of those parts of Mr. Pitt's speech, in which he vindicated the conduct of that gentleman, or to controvert any of the general principles he had advanced respecting Indian politics, or their application to the present

CHAP. VII. 1786.

question: but Mr. Dempster, Mr. W. Grenville, lord Mulgrave, and the attorney general, the last three of whom were intimately connected with Mr. Pitt, all declared, that they could not agree with him in thinking, that the charge contained sufficient matter to be included in any articles of impeachment. On the other hand, Mr. Powys expressed his satisfaction at having heard so honorable and manly an argument from the chancellor of the exchequer: a more able and convincing one, he said, had scarcely ever been delivered within those walls. He could not, however, but lament, that the right honorable gentleman was left alone, that he was deserted by his friends; and that two of the ministers for India* had argued against the resolution, and embraced sentiments so repugnant to those professed by the right honorable gentleman. Mr. Powys said, that the two ministers for India had virtually avowed, that political expediency sanctified injustice—a maxim to which he could not accede.

Lord Mulgrave declared, that Mr. Pitt would not be fit to be minister of the country for a single day, if upon a question of that nature, when the house was sitting as judges, he was to expect his friends to sacrifice their opinions. Mr. Pitt regretted, that there should be any difference of opinion between himself and his friends; but it was an honorable difference, not a difference about a principle, but about the application of a principle: he thought fifty lacks a most exorbitant fine, and his honorable and noble friends did not. The majority of the house concurred with Mr. Pitt; the motion being carried by 119 to 79.

* Lord Mulgrave and Mr. W. Grenville were members of the board of control.

It being found impossible to go through all the charges in the present session, the farther consideration of them was deferred to the next meeting of parliament.

The prorogation took place on the 11th of July, when the king, in his speech from the throne, thanked the two houses for their diligent attention to the public business; and particularly, for the measures they had adopted for improving the resources of the country, and reducing the national debt: he informed them of the prospect of the continuance of general tranquillity; and assured them, that nothing should be wanting on his part, to confirm the advantages already derived from peace; and to encourage the manufactures of the kingdom and the industry of his people.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME

00036722

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 17 February, 2016